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The Editors
TIME FOR SANCTIONS

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AUGUST 15, 1986

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James Gaffney

The transformation of Catholic moral thinking

No news is good news?
Not in El Salvador.

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THE THIRD WORLD: IS FASCISM ITS FUTURE?

DANCE: THE DARK SIDE OF THE BOOM

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THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: FIFTY

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Correspondence

Unreasonable outrage

Nahant, Mass.

To the Editors: I think you are overreacting on the Curran affair ["Doctrine & Dissent: the Curran Case," March 28]. "Disastrous" is too strong a word. It's not just that there are a lot of us out here who think that Curran is wrong and the Vatican is right about questions in dispute: abortion (What in the name of clarity is "a value commensurate with life itself"?), homosexuality, premarital sex, and indissolubility of marriage (Jesus and/or the Bible seem perfectly clear and Curran's "theology of compromise" does not).

Juli Loesch has persuaded me [*Commonweal* October 13, 1985] that even on contraception Paul VI may have been more right than wrong, despite my earlier conviction to the contrary.

But most of all, your outrage is unseemly and unreasonable because, if the Vatican cannot insist that in the *Catholic* University of America, which above all others represents the Roman Catholic church, theologians shall be employed who also represent the preferred teaching of that church, where indeed and what indeed does the magisterium of that church amount to? Nothing at all, as far as I can see.

You are a thousand times right to insist on due process, but Father Curran seems to have had plenty of opportunity to defend his positions. There is no dispute about what he teaches. You are right to insist on more clarity on the Vatican's part as to what defines "a Catholic theologian" and what are the perimeters of dissent. Dissenters have rights, true, but so does the papacy. If not, we might as well be Protestants. JOHN C. CORT

Shades of Galileo

South Bend, Ind.

To the Editors: Congratulations on your brilliant editorial, "Doctrine & Dissent: the Curran Case," [March 28]. The actions of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are nothing short of scandalous in that they give new life to moth-eaten apocrypha about the incompatibility of responsible inquiry and Roman Catholicism. Catholic higher education in the U.S. has made major strides in combining free inquiry with allegiance to Catholic tradition and, in so doing, it has earned the respect of the general academic community. But when words like "probable" and "possible" are excised from a theologian's vocabulary in areas of non-infallible teachings, all the elements are there for a new Galileo case — one the church will regret even more than the last one.

JAMES R. LANGFORD

A Stone rejected

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: As an interested reader of Robert Stone's novels, I have seen no better summary of his work, or review of his latest work, *Children of Light*, than that of Robert Jones in the May 23, 1986 issue of *Commonweal*. I hope Stone will stop trying to write a novel of ideas, and get down to what he does best: drawing up portraits of our soullessness from within his fictional kingdom of extremes. I agree with Robert Jones: if and when Stone does, we could all take him more seriously. BRENT SHORT

Mauriac's tangle

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: William Dunlea's intense and extensive study of François Mauriac ["A Genius for Passion & Purity, May 23] brings clarity into the turbulent disposition of Mauriac's heroes, and into the tensions Mauriac experienced as a Catholic writer. I regret, however, especially for those who have never read Mauriac, that Dunlea does not adequately expose the delusion and disappointment to which Thérèse Desqueyroux falls, attempting to poison her husband, and how, years later in *La fin de la nuit*, the same Thérèse, exiled in Paris, falls in love with the fiancé of her daughter. Indeed, Mauriac goes deep into the arcana of our *misère*.

William Dunlea rightly calls for a rediscovery in America of Mauriac's literary and psychological mastery. If Dunlea is correct that Mauriac's English translations are the chief obstacle to such an appreciation, his plea should be heard: Let us translate Mauriac afresh. The task is quite worth the while.

JACQUES TRAVERS
Professor of French
Brooklyn College

Lies & innuendos

Silver Spring, Md.

To the Editors: The editors must be aware that when Cardinal Glemp decried "the myth of Polish anti-Semitism" [editorial, "Beloved of God," May 9], he did not deny the existence, past or present, of anti-Semitism in Poland. He was speaking of direct lies and of innuendos of the kind that the editors themselves appear to be bent on propagating. He was talking of such lies as TV's "The Holocaust" sequence in which a Warsaw Ghetto execution squad wears Polish Army uniforms. He was talking about the wholesale lies in a plethora of books, articles, movies and lectures. "Polish anti-Semitism," "Hispanic laziness," "Black criminality," or "Jewish usuriousness" are all myths, equally to be condemned. BOGUMIL KOŚCIESZA

Assaulting Canada

Ottawa, Ontario

To the Editors: Congratulations on the attention paid to the issue of Canadian-American free trade by Jordan Bishop

(Continued on page 444)

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A TIME FOR SANCTIONS

THE LAST two years have seen over 2,100 deaths in South Africa. If we were to list them here, the pages would cry out. But things are only going to grow bloodier.

The last two months of emergency rule in South Africa have seen over 10,000 people detained. If we were to give their names, they would fill this magazine. But it is illegal to give their names. South African law forbids it. What jails are full?

And if we were to suggest economic sanctions as a means of bringing Pretoria to its senses — admitting it might take years, and that it would surely exact tremendous human suffering, not only in South Africa but among its neighbors — we would be told by some we are being immoral for causing such suffering.

What an odd course of reasoning, that those who have benefited from the apartheid system, stalling its reform and reaping their wealth and power from the servitude and degradation of millions, should wag an angry pale fist and say that others are immoral and that the coming bloodbath will not be their responsibility.

That is not to deny Western complicity. It is not to deny the moral vacuousness of some of our leaders. But it is to remind us of our duties, now and in the future.

Human rights are not the product of state benevolence. They are not the creation of mere custom. They do not wait to emerge only after a given level of economic or racial accomplishment has been attained. Human rights precede all these. They legitimate all these. They are sacred and inviolable. And as such, they must be affirmed, respected, vindicated, defended. Always. To do otherwise would be to condemn ourselves before our very nature.

Why is it that those who oppose economic sanctions against Pretoria are those who wield political power there, or those abroad who most benefit from the economics of apartheid? Why is it that those who are suffering the most already (70 percent of black South Africans desire some form of sanctions), or are most likely to suffer in the future (the "front-line" black states that either border or are heavily dependent on South African trade), have been the strongest in calling for such sanctions? Because they know that only by raising the "cost of apartheid" will the Pretoria government ever move to recognize the majority of its disenfranchised citizens as equal bearers of the human nobility.

The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee has made a significant step in calling for workable, persuasive, limited sanctions. It has been seconded by a majority of the Commonwealth nations. Its recommendations deserve immediate approval for two reasons: First, to send a message to South Africa and the world that the American people care. And second, because moral persuasion alone will not change Pretoria. That will only come from what, last February, the *Economist* called "the best cool-calculating argument for sanctions": concerted economic and political coercion.

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Our responsibility will not stop with sanctions. It will have just begun. But unless we act now, not only our moral and economic interests will be in peril, but our strategic concerns as well. Sanctions are but one small step in a long and mighty race. They are scarcely more than a gesture, and decidedly less when motivated by mere self-righteousness. But they are a movement in the right direction. And the stakes are high, so much higher than manganese, platinum, or even gold.

WOUND IN THE HEART

Albert Camus once compared the Spanish Civil War to an evil wound in the heart of a generation. The generation has passed from power, the wound has healed. Or so one might conclude. It is fifty years since the outbreak of Franco's Nationalist rebellion against the Spanish Republic, and very little has been said or done to mark the event, in Spain or elsewhere.

The reason may be less the passing of time than the waning of passion and the blurring of certainty. Spain played havoc with every doctrine. Pacifists had become convinced that after the trenches of World War I only "merchants of death" could approve a war which would mean the nearly instantaneous leveling of Europe's cities; now they discovered that ordinary men and women still believed certain things were worth fighting for, and even the most cruel and life-wasting struggle could drag on without apocalyptic resolution.

Revolutionaries were elated to see workers and peasants spontaneously take charge of both their own defense and their own organizations; then they watched military necessity and Communist tyranny exert a grip on the "revolution" as oppressive as any that had preceded it.

The Western powers refused to intervene in Spain out of fear of provoking a general European war; six months after Franco finally entered Madrid, Hitler invaded Poland and World War II began.

Geopoliticians argued that a Franco victory would give the Axis control of the Mediterranean; in the event, Franco kept Spain largely out of the war, and by the time the conflict came, Hitler and Stalin were allies anyway: would a Republic under Stalinist sway have served the West any better?

Spain, wrote Arthur Koestler, "caused the last twitch of Europe's dying conscience." It may have been a terrible error to identify the cause of resistance to fascism with the defense of the Spanish Republic — a firm response to Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland might have been more to the point strategically — but the identification was made nonetheless, and once it had been made, the moral and political stakes in Spain were dramatically raised. Nazi troops entered the post-Munich remains of Czechoslovakia the same month that Franco entered Madrid. The two events were not unrelated.

Still, it was definitely a dying conscience that twitched in Spain, one twisted and inflamed by political and religious passions. Ideologies first killed their victims, then crumbled into Spanish graveyards alongside them. A vast literature of disillusionment was the war's legacy to the political left.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated September 12, after which regular bi-weekly publication will be resumed.

Heroism, generosity, solidarity were buried in the muck of political murder, private bloodlust, and public propaganda. Much of the intellectual left's reaction was summed up in Auden's gesture when he took a copy of his poem "Spain" off a friend's shelf some years later and simply wrote "This is a lie" next to the concluding lines.

The Catholic drama of conscience is less well known. Horrified by the anti-clerical atrocities that marked the first response to the right-wing uprising and molded by a century of battle against "the Reds," Catholic spokesmen the world over gave their approval to Franco's crusade. A few voices were raised in dissent. Having been shocked by the anti-religious pillaging of the war's early days, François Mauriac was able to be equally shocked by the Nationalist atrocities that followed. On the feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1936, Franco supporters massacred Republicans in the bull ring of Badajoz, and Mauriac responded, "The mass execution of the conquered, the extermination of the enemy — as was the law before Christ — represents the most horrible triumph that the powers of darkness know in this world." Mauriac, Mounier, Maritain, and the veteran monarchist Georges Bernanos continued the protest, not on behalf of the Spanish Loyalists but on behalf of their Christian faith, abused and defaced by those who would enlist the cross in the Nationalist campaign. They protested the bombing of cities, the slaughter of noncombatants, the exploitation of religious fervor, the alignment of the church with the right-wing forces rather than with the victims on all sides. For this they were frequently denounced by fellow Catholics as "ideologues," dupes of the Communists, "red Christians," enemies of Rome. Maritain became "a second-hand theologian" and one of the journals in which he and his associates frequently wrote was suppressed by the Vatican. When *Commonweal* published and endorsed their views, it encountered the same sort of outrage here.

A decade ago, Jean-Marie Domenach wrote about a photograph Bernanos always kept on his worktable. "It shows about ten Spanish archbishops, in 1937 or '38, standing on the steps of a cathedral with their arms outstretched in the fascist salute, welcoming Franco's generals come to celebrate their victory. Catholics of my generation have had to live with this shame. But, in a way, it spurred us on, aroused us to the struggle."

In the end, the dissenting voices were vindicated. Bernard Doering, in *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), argues that this refusal of allegiance to Franco was a critical contribution to the current of thought culminating in the Vatican II Declaration on Religious Liberty. Not all those who are eager to celebrate this achievement are willing to appreciate the struggle that lay behind it.

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But memory is short. Given the bloodshed and the bitterness of the war in Spain, perhaps forgetfulness is blessed. Could those events of fifty years ago help us face the bloodshed and bitterness of our day — the civil wars in Central America, for instance, where revolutionary dreams, power politics, international rivalry, and religious fervor all play parts faintly reminiscent of those in civil-war Spain? Or would we only pick out from the Spanish case whatever recollections might serve our present purposes — of revolutionary enthusiasm or revolutionary betrayal, of clerical or Communist manipulation, of foreign intervention or international solidarity, of heroic resistance or fratricidal brutality? What does it mean that the Loyalist slogan of the thirties, *"No pasáran,"* has become the anti-*contra* cry chanted by the Sandinista supporters who recently filled New York's Riverside Church to hear Daniel Ortega? History may impart wisdom; it does not spell out lessons. For our part, we remember the challenge issued by Mauriac in 1937: "The only *raison d'être* for writers, and especially Catholic writers, in the midst of civil wars, is their lucidity; the only merit of which they can boast is to see more clearly than others, to reason more exactly, and to outmaneuver in their own minds and hearts the machinations of the party spirit."

WELCOMING THOUGHTS

The recent release of Father Lawrence Martin Jenco, after nearly nineteen months of captivity in Lebanon, has given Americans more than a proper cause for thanksgiving, as welcome as that may be. Even now, the experiences of this soft-spoken Servite priest have focused attention on the mysterious intersection between politics and prayer, where the art of the possible and the art of the impossible meet.

"I am so grateful to God to be present with my family," Jenco said while still in Wiesbaden, "to have hugs and kisses, to love again, to rediscover I have dignity as a person." The items on Jenco's list of thanks is a reminder that human dignity is fragile. It can be assaulted by the most common deprivations. One need not be tortured, starved, or beaten. It takes only a three-foot ankle chain linking one to a cell wall; lack of clothing, a bed, a chair; a simple cloth blindfold to screen out the sun and the human face; or withholding all companionship day in, day out, for months on end. Lack of presence, conversation, or touch is all it takes.

Of course, human tenacity, resourcefulness, the ability to transcend circumstances, to hope, and to forgive are also crucial parts of the story of Father Jenco and his family. But national reflection must not be limited to the personal, however powerful. It must address what Jenco calls "the tragedy of Lebanon," and the Lebanese peoples' "great desire for healing" and peace between Christians and Moslems.

According to Moorhead Kennedy, who was held hostage for over a year in Teheran, this requires our nation's "growing up internationally." It means exploring the disquieting religious, cultural, and political conundrums raised by this protracted incident of terrorism in Lebanon, looking at it as one symptom of the whole Middle East malaise. The intricate web must be untangled, the mutual interests discerned, and perhaps even the irreconcilable goals frankly acknowledged.

This is a program easy to outline, vexing to implement. Even as we write, contradictory statements appear in the press about what messages were or were not given Father Jenco to deliver. Who is the Islamic Jihad, other than "a shadowy group"? Have Father Jenco's captors tacitly responded to the seriousness of the ecclesiastical diplomacy carried out by Anglican envoy Terry Waite and New York's Cardinal John O'Connor — or are they as unwilling to acknowledge the moral power of Christianity as the Reagan administration is set against legitimating terrorism by engaging in negotiations? Is the generally sound principle of refusing to make concessions to terrorists becoming a substitute for any overall U.S. policy toward Lebanon and its warring factions? No one should expect answers soon. At least we might try to keep the complexities in view for public consideration, even amidst the celebration of a captive's long-awaited return.

ETC.

● Israel has just named Major General Amos Yaron to be military attaché to the U.S. In view of the military aid the U.S. supplies Israel, this assignment is one of the most important — and, at the moment, one of the most delicate — an Israeli officer can receive. Yaron, however, is not just any officer. He is one of two Israeli military leaders who were relieved of command after the Phalangist massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Yaron was found to have learned that the massacres were underway, but to have neither reported them nor attempted to stop them. The Israeli announcement of his appointment deftly omitted all mention of Yaron's Lebanese service from the list of his military assignments. General Yaron and his superiors are hereby nominated to receive the First Annual Kurt Waldheim Selective Memory Award.

● Our editorial on "Judges & Ideology" (July 11) posthumously promoted the distinguished Supreme Court Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson to the position of chief justice. Senate hearings will be held next month.

Nation-building today

GROUND FOR TRAGEDY

THE RELEVANCE OF FASCISM

TRUTH IS RARELY equivalent to beauty; and a truth of transcendent ugliness is that racist dictatorship has been *the* means of nation-building on earth for a millennium. Nor does this ugly truth only pertain to the past. It suggests that fascism — the racist autocracy of yesterday married to the

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technology of today — will be more relevant to the future circumstances of more of our world than democracy or socialism in any of their many forms.

Fascism remains relevant because strong nationalisms are rare in much of the third world — where boundaries often consist of lines drawn on maps by once-dominant European powers, and where *mores* remain those of clan, tribe, or village, laced with hefty dollops of *jihad*-prone religiosity.

Lebanon provides a grisly lesson about what happens when fledgling national elites fail to move traditionalists towards workable equations of sovereignty, survival, and civilization. Lebanon's leaders failed to utilize the techniques that had (sometimes) succeeded in the West: secular-scientific education; the organization of diverse linguistic, religious, and other groups around common symbols of unity and pride; and the creation of national missions not involving tribal *Volk*-ism and the drive to cleanse the land of *Untermenschen*. The bloody, tribalistic religiosity of Beirut, moreover, has its counterparts in recent events in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, Iran, the Republic of South Africa, India, and the China of the Red Guards. Would-be nation-builders want, above all, to avoid the all-too-real alternatives of unification or disaster. So ruthless efforts are made to advance backwards into the past in search of cultural, racialist, or spiritual universalisms which hardly-ever were. Where the realpolitik of racist dictatorship works, or is not widely noticed, all goes well-enough, and success covers a multitude of sins. Particularly if the sinners be deemed to be Fathers of their countries. Where megalomaniacal elements enter into the picture too insistently, or slaughter is too highly visible, the rationales of "national survival" or "national unity" do not hold water; the sinners (Qaddafi of Libya and the "clerical fascist" ayatollahs of Iran come to mind) are freely equated with Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo in their worst moments.

"The Left-Wing Movement, which overthrew the Center Coalition, was usurped by the People's Popular Front, which in turn succumbed to the Right-Wing Faction and has now been replaced by the National Liberation Party— so you're still in power!"

What we need to understand is that racialism and dictatorship are nothing new in the world, specifically as major tools for nation-building. The nationalisms of Bismarck, Louis XIV, or Peter the Great were not especially humane exercises. Wholesale violations of the rights of minorities were a key component in that procedure, not least when nation-builders saw themselves in weak or endangered circumstances. We do not need to go to the Israeli-occupied West Bank to learn this. We can ask any American "Indian" from the Canadian Arctic to Tierra del Fuego, or any Hmong tribesman in Southeast Asia.

"History" is not going to get nicer because we wish it to. We may balk at the idea that democratic or socialist ideologies are largely irrelevant to much of what is transpiring in the third world. But most nations and nation-builders there are too concerned with survival to care much about the nuances of imported ideals.

We need, for example, to understand that South Africa is not undergoing a "national liberation struggle" à la 1776, the French Revolution, or October, 1917. It is involved in a many-sided struggle which pits black against white, African tribe against African tribe, Anglo against Afrikaner, and which leaves others (Indians and Coloreds, above all) in unenviable betwixt-and-between situations. What could result from a successful uprising in South Africa might well be anything from a Uganda to a Nigeria before the Biafran civil war, or perhaps an unstable version of one-party-state Zimbabwe-Rhodesia (with whites much more numerous; and where no one African tribe, à la Mugabe's in Zimbabwe, enjoys overwhelming numerical dominance).

This is *not* to say we should be conservative ostriches; that we should be like the advisors who urged Canute to order the tides to stop. The tides will not stop. Not for all the Red-baiting and paeans to long-term developmental effects of free enterprise currently gospel among Reaganites.

We should comprehend, rather, that the process of secure nation-building in the third world will occupy many decades, and that it will be much more inhumane, racist, violent, and dictatorial than we would choose. The third world is the Balkans of our era. It is the spawning ground for tragedy that may draw superpowers into wider wars which none intends. To avoid ad hocery, crisis-mongering, and Vietnam-style idiocy, we need to cease moral posturing and start thinking. History is no romantic fairy tale written for our particular benefit. It is not Good versus Evil contending in the arena, with us up in the stands eating popcorn and rooting for "our" side. Politics, third-world style, is often — a lot more often — droves and flocks and myriads of "teams" all playing different games by different rules, all allying or un-allying with one another on the basis of interests rather than ideals held-in-common, and all demanding that the audiences on the scene (who are not comfortably separated from the action but, instead, smack in the midst of it) do their bidding or else. What results looks a lot more like a riot in a bar than it does like the

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Super Bowl or the World Series. What results involves evasion, hypocrisy, cynical power grabbing and re-grabbing, terror wholesale and terror retail, and a lot of "Let's stay-alive-by-supporting-whoever-looks-like-they're-winning today." To ignore realities like these is to cheer for the good guys on "our" side . . . until it is clear that they were never on our side at all . . . and then to back off from the action furiously protesting that we weren't ever really in favor of all that at all. Or to discover suddenly that the third-world heroes or villains (whoever they happen to be at any particular moment) are "no longer deserving of our support" because they are no longer playing by our rules.

The point is that they never were. Not in Vietnam or Cambodia or Iran then; not in Nicaragua or South Africa now. Not in Angola or Afghanistan either, where Soviet *cognoscenti* delude themselves into believing that they have created "New Peoples" almost instantaneously, thanks to a lot of education in the ideological finer points — and, of course, a lot more military power. To believe that habits of mind like democracy or democratic socialism (or even Soviet-style Communism) can be imported into a third-world country and put to work the way that a computer can be programmed to store, process, and reproduce abstract information (the "right" input always getting you the "right" output) is no less dogmatic gush than the teachings of a Qaddafi. For fascism, in the form of leaders trying to make their countries strong by any means available and exercising an all-important unity of command at the center, will remain a constant resort in the many regions of the third world. These are areas where socio-cultural, political, and economic cohesion of any sort is a process constantly threatened from within and without. They are, in other words, "nations" still learning how to be nations.

Hatred, as a Mussolini or a Hitler or a Tojo well understood — and as a Khomeini or a Qaddafi understands now — is a much stronger short-term glue than love. Or a natural rights/social contract approach to governance. Or Hegelian dialectic and the labor theory of value. Human beings, alas, tend to be better at remembering the ills they suffer from than those they inflict. When hatred is wedded to fear, a combination is produced which can fuel the engines of nation-building like none other. Add a racist ideology to this picture, a fear and hatred of more-or-less easily identifiable and punishable "others," and nation-building and national strength can become comparatively quick achievements. To assume that large segments of the third world will not search for fast-paced achievement and tend to follow a fascist path earlier trod by many of the "new nations" of Europe and Asia during the course of this century is to confuse probabilities with desires and dreams. The future may well belong to racist dictatorship rather than to the ideological universalisms of Rousseau or Marx.

Americans will ignore this stark and unpalatable truth at their expense. Democracy, as Americans know it, and classical Marxist-Leninism, as Communist nations sometimes try to apply it, are largely irrelevant to much of what will transpire in the third world for the remainder of this century and most of the next. Fascism, on the other hand, will be all-too-relevant, very often, for either our humanity or for our political taste. Racist dictatorship has been, and will remain, a constant in human society. Abstract and inclusive nationalities such as that of the United States will remain the decided exception. Would-be nations are much too concerned with short-term survival to care very much about, say, the Enlightenment ideas and ideals that made both modern democracy — and modern democratic socialism — possible in the first place. It is time to prepare ourselves for that grisly, tragic, but also likely fact.

KIM McQUAID

(For the past year, Kim McQuaid was Washington Visiting Professor of U.S. History at University College, Dublin.)

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

RIGHT ATTENTION

REFLECTIONS ON TIME'S MERCY

IN THE small church I attend there are two very old men. Both of them are in their mid-nineties. Both are in good health. If you have to live to be that old it would be good to do it as well as they seem to have.

They are as different as they could be. One is sly and funny, jokes easily, takes an active part in the liturgy, flirts in a pleasant way, and plays with the children. He is plainly a life-long extrovert. The other is quiet and retiring and has that radiating serenity which you sometimes hear that old people are supposed to have, but you seldom really encounter. The serenity of the old is too often the wishful thinking of the young. (Take note: this last sentence is an aphorism and is to be copied down in your special notebook before it gets away.)

Here you have both aged liveliness and aged serenity, not necessarily contradictory things. I have noticed that these two old men sit together often, as different as they are, watching what everyone else is doing. I know that they know things I do not know yet, and they know them from a perspective I will not have for years, if I ever do.

When I was little, age was strange and never seemed to have anything to do with my life other than offer an inconvenient barrier to fun. Before running into a cousin's backyard I had to run a course which involved grown-up bad breath and whiskery kisses, and occasional boring dinner table questions about school. Now that I am in my forties I have an in-between status: I know now that what separates me from my image of age, the one formed in childhood, is a couple of decades — it doesn't seem like so much

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time now.

I realize now that one thing which seemed to characterize age was a clear pattern of conversation and concerns, a desire to get something across, something which should be passed on and which was in some way our job (that is, the job of the listening younger people) to pass on. This was part of the way some of my older relatives acted, anyway, and while all of what got acted out and said was not good, much of it was. And what was good was very good.

My grandfather died in his mid-nineties; his wife had died two years before that. He suffered from Parkinson's disease, as well as the rigors of living into an age most of us can't imagine, and the sadness of missing someone with whom he had a long and good marriage. We talked a couple of times before he died — once two years before his death, the second time only a few weeks before. What was said was the same, and the way it was said was different. Both times he talked about how important a good marriage was, and how blessed I was in my marriage. He talked too about how blessed he had been, and how nothing could repay that blessing. The first time he told me these things he wept. I knew, from what some of the people who had been taking care of him said, that he was frequently lonely, remembering my grandmother and his dead brothers and sisters. When I left him that first time everyone was weeping. I wasn't sure when, if ever, we would see one another again. The second time he said many of the same things, in a way which made it clear that he had not only arrived at a peace and acceptance that had not been apparent before; he said these things with an authority which came from knowing how close death was, and there was not the same sadness. I can't say what that means, only that something was there which was not there before, and there is something good about the fact that the same words, words which the first time came from deep emotional sorrow and involvement, were now said with what seemed like a peace and clarity and willingness to wait and accept the death which was obviously not far off.

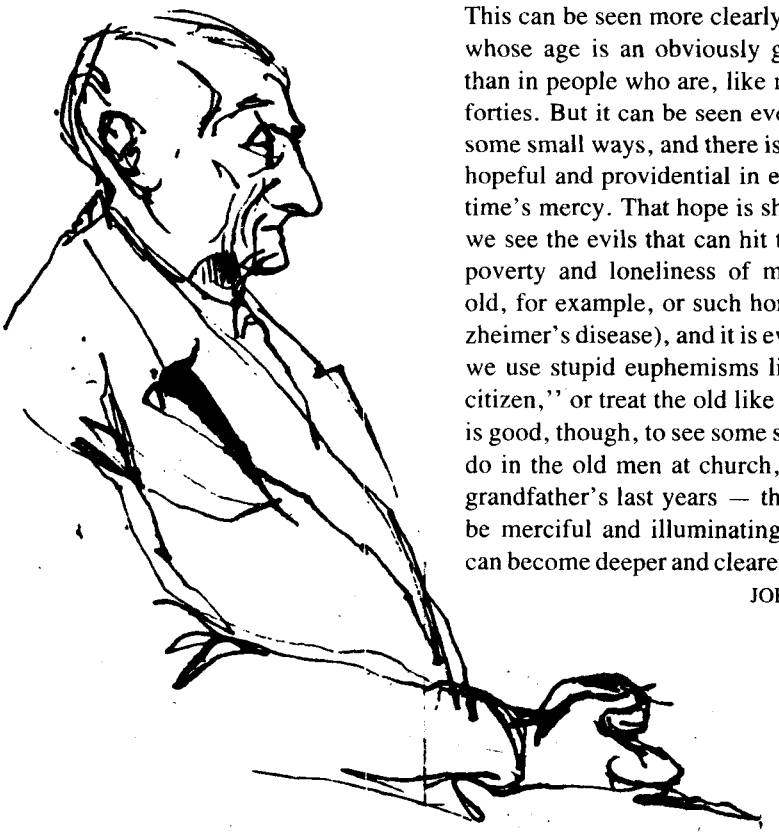
But I realized too that I might be sentimentalizing this. My aunt and uncle lived close by and had seen all the best and the worst of my grandfather's last weeks. It was easy for me to read lessons and parables where they might see something more difficult and complicated. What is clear, though, is that his life was a complete one, and he had lived it in a way which allowed him to know it as a blessing, and be grateful. There is that clarity in some old people, and it may come from paying the right sort of attention to life.

A couple of years ago I attended a high school reunion, something I resisted for years because I had hated high school: who wants to go to a celebration of the Good Old Days at the Gulag? My wife wanted to go, though, and we had a good time, which surprised me. One of the most pleasant surprises was to see the way men who had felt the need to be hard guys, all macho, in high school had now become gentle and genial, helped along that way by marriage and fatherhood and, more, by understanding that they really didn't have to act a role which once seemed so important.

That made me examine the way I had changed. There is an intensity, one which has an edge of violence and crudeness, about adolescence and youth, and it is no doubt necessary for getting young people through a very hard time of life. If it diminishes with time, the reasons are physical as well as psychological. But something more than a shift from one stage to another happens here: the maturing process, in allowing (for example) men to become more gentle and less violent, has been an evolution upward, towards something better. A senior in high school who throws his weight around may command a certain amount of fear-based respect. A forty-year-old boss who does the same thing may get fear-based results, but he is properly seen as a fool, and it is time that has made his foolishness apparent.

If some things which irritate me about myself go away, it will probably be less because I have disciplined myself properly and more because time has worn them away. If in some ways I am, like the men I met at the high school reunion, a better person than I was when I was nineteen, it doesn't have to do with anything I tried to learn, but with lessons handed to me, sometimes against my will, by the passage of time and what it has to teach. This can be seen more clearly in the old, whose age is an obviously good thing, than in people who are, like me, in their forties. But it can be seen even there, in some small ways, and there is something hopeful and providential in examples of time's mercy. That hope is shaken when we see the evils that can hit the old (the poverty and loneliness of many of the old, for example, or such horrors as Alzheimer's disease), and it is evaded when we use stupid euphemisms like "senior citizen," or treat the old like children. It is good, though, to see some signs — as I do in the old men at church, and in my grandfather's last years — that time can be merciful and illuminating, that lives can become deeper and clearer with time.

JOHN GARVEY



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Church/world watch

Central American policy: the dangerous drift

J. Bryan Hehir

IN CENTRAL AMERICA, events are moving in the wrong direction.

The war in El Salvador grinds on, partially obscured in American attention by the debate over Nicaragua but, nonetheless, very real for the Salvadorans. Their economy is in ruins. A "low-intensity" war bleeds their nation. A president of impeccable intentions is increasingly paralyzed by the needs to negotiate with his own military as if it were a separate government.

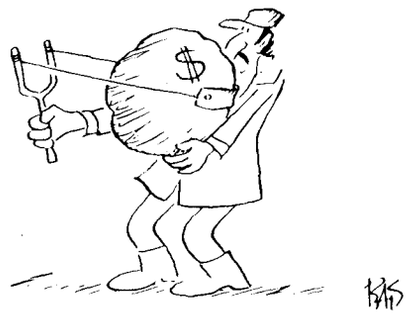
If too little attention is being paid El Salvador, the same can hardly be said about Nicaragua. The *contra* aid vote in Congress, the intensified attack by the Sandinistas on the Catholic hierarchy in Nicaragua — these have made Nicaragua front-page news.

Quantity of attention, however, does not guarantee quality of analysis or insight. Beneath the surface of daily conflicts lies a set of unanswered questions. Unless these questions are specified, they cannot be answered, and unless they are answered, Nicaragua policy will just drift or be driven by the loudest voices.

A column in *Commonweal* may justifiably begin with a concern for the Nicaraguan church. What logic, one asks with a degree of puzzlement and frustration, drives the Sandinista policy of confrontation with the Catholic hierarchy, a confrontation now raised to a whole new level by the expulsion of Bishop Antonio Vega? For a regime beset by internal and external forces to expel the nation's second most visible ecclesiastical figure leaves an outside observer stunned by the Sandinistas' political ineptitude.

Managua's official explanation is that the U.S. House vote to provide $100 million in aid to the *contras* amounts to a declaration of war, and leaves no room for the kind of visible and vocal dissent within Nicaragua that Bishop Vega was determined to continue. But however the *contra* vote is assessed, the Sandinista response was clearly self-defeating. There are solid church-state grounds on which the case against the Sandinista action can be — and is being — made. The political case is more mundane but no less significant. No outside institution so directly influences world public opinion on Central America as the Catholic church. By most standards, the wider church — the Holy See, the church in Western Europe, the church in the United States — has been a moderating force in the international debate over Nicaragua. The Sandinista action guarantees — indeed, has already produced — a strong, unified condemnation from all those quarters.

Undoubtedly opinions differ in the church outside Nicaragua about how to relate to the Sandinistas. This in turn reflects much deeper splits within the Nicaraguan church itself. But the church's institutional response to the expulsion of a bishop is certain to be unified, powerful, and sustained. In the words of government policy and international perceptions, that institutional response will be the controlling view. To be blunt, the Sandinistas have started a fight they cannot afford to finish. The decision on Bishop Vega should be reconsidered and rescinded for any number of reasons.



If the Sandinistas cannot be moved by reasons of piety, they should at least understand those of sheer political logic.

In the U.S., the action turns not on the church but the state. The *contra* vote is as damaging here as the Vega decision is in Nicaragua. Just as the reaction to Bishop Vega's expulsion was predictable, so too the consequences of the *contra* vote are predictable. The vote is significant both for what it does and for what it promises.

What it does immediately is make the *contras* a more sophisticated fighting force. Few believe that $100 million will give them the capacity to overthrow the Sandinistas, but it can raise the level of suffering, mostly for peasants in the contested areas. The *contras* can increase the pressure but not change the regime.

In the background of this discussion lurks a large question: do either the *contras* or the United States have the moral or legal right to unseat the Sandinistas? While I am not of the view that they do, it is a different moral question that needs to be highlighted here, one involving the relationship of means to ends. Classical moral thinking about war contains a principle of "reasonable hope of success." Even in pursuit of a justifiable objective the means employed must have a possibility of achieving their end. Official Washington's response is that the objective of the *contra* aid is not to overthrow the Sandinistas but to create pressure for negotiations. But for that objective, one can readily answer that the means being used are both disproportionate and inappropriate. If negotiations are what is needed, they should be pursued by means other than taking the lives and ravaging the lands of Nicaragua's peasant population. (The identical argument can be made against the armed left in El Salvador.)

If that is what the *contra* aid does right now, what it promises to do may be even more serious. What it promises, in brief, is to assure that the mili-

(Continued on page 446)

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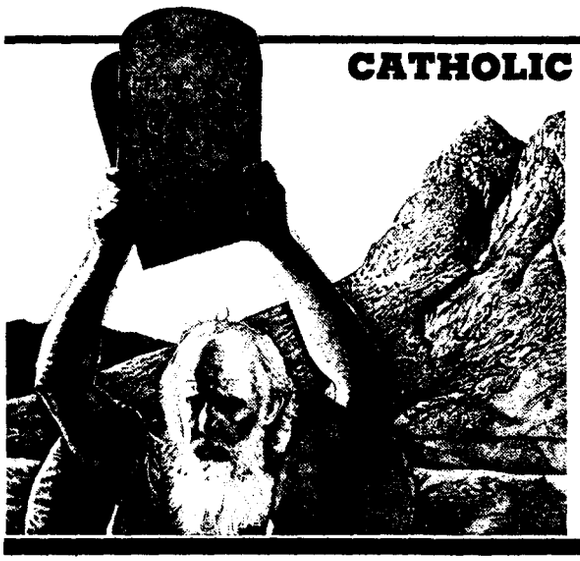

Values, victims, & visions

JAMES GAFFNEY

A LITTLE MORE than a century ago, as a tribute to his recently deceased wife, a great English poet wrote an extraordinary poem. It is admirable in a number of respects, not least its telling of a truly fascinating story. But what continues to interest me is that, from start to finish, it is a poem about moral thinking.

The masterpiece called *The Ring and the Book*, which Robert dedicated to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, is about the once very famous murder of an adolescent Italian girl and her elderly parents by her middle-aged husband, allegedly to avenge the girl's infidelity with a young local priest. Because the defendant himself had received minor orders, he succeeded in having the case transferred from civil to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The case was eventually decided in a criminal tribunal of the Vatican.

The connection of all this with moral thinking is the remarkable way Browning constructed his dramatic monologue. He causes the entire story to be re-told, time after time, by very different people, each with contrasting social positions, backgrounds, interests, assumptions, ambitions, and degrees of personal involvement. We are compelled to view the same crude facts from a variety of personal and social moral viewpoints. We discover that what one account presents as momentous appears trivial in another. We find motives not even suspected in one taken for granted in another. We see heroes transform into villains and villains into non-entities. Virtues turn into vices, bystanders into participants, and neutral circumstances into compelling influences. Each account is a peculiar mosaic of lights and shadows, and the pattern of vividness and obscurity constantly changes. Hence, for the reader, even though a definite fabric of facts remains substantially unaltered, the moral picture is repeatedly transformed. What causes the transformations are the different human viewpoints from which it is perceived. G.K. Chesterton characterized *The Ring and the Book* as a "spiritual detective story." When the mystery is concluded in the final scene what assures us of the verdict is neither knowledge of facts nor knowledge of law, but the spiritual discernment of an aged saint, dedicated to justice, trustful of God, close to death, and unconcerned about anything this world could bestow or withhold.

To me, it has come to seem fairly clear that changes in the way modern Catholics think about morality are explicable, to a considerable extent, in much the same way as those transformations of moral perception that are the most original feature of Browning's poem. Moral cases, including typical ones, look different, and therefore are analyzed and judged differently, depending on the perspective in which they are viewed. And that perspective depends on who the viewers are, and how they are enabled and accustomed to do their seeing. In this respect, moral judgment is similar to legal judgment, and the practical significance of differing perspectives for legal judgment is something of which we all become acutely aware whenever we watch trial lawyers in a selection of jurors.

For a very long time, nearly since the Protestant Reformation, and until quite recently, Catholic moral judgments exhibited a remarkable degree of uniformity. A major reason for that was the control exerted on such judgments by a body of doctrine called moral theology, censored and authorized by the church, and developed for the most part to assist priests in administering the sacrament of Penance. The main assistance it offered was twofold: first, to identify the kinds of sins being confessed; and second, to ascertain the guilt of the person who confessed them.

Many things, both favorable and unfavorable, can be said about that confessional system and the moral theology that derived its character from it. But it also had a confining effect on moral perspective, and therefore on moral thinking.

That confinement depended on both the setting and the characters. Because the setting was juridical, it had to rely on a definite set of statutes, in effect criminal and penal laws, official specifications of punishable offenses. Penitents had

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the task of translating their recent moral histories into terms of infractions of these laws. The confessor was there to help them do so, and moral theology was his equipment for that function. From the nature of the case, the laws had to be stable and uniform, and so did the procedures for interpreting them. Under such circumstances, moral theology had every reason to be conservative and dogmatic. It had no reason to be original or philosophical.

The confessional orientation confined moral thinking for other reasons was well. Among them must be included the fact that the whole procedure was directed not only by a quite rigid set of norms, but also by a highly specialized set of persons. All of them were men; none women. All of them were celibate; none spouses, and none parents. Nearly all had received a very similar, and quite peculiar, education. All were full-time functionaries of a vast, hierarchical institution. None of these characteristics is objectionable in itself. But even with maximum allowance for individuality, and maximum resistance to clerical stereotyping, it remains obvious that no random assortment of Roman Catholic priests could be seriously regarded as a cross-section of humanity at large. Yet no one else was ever allowed to have much to do with formulating or administering moral theology, until very recently.

In still other ways, the penitent's role contributed to a confinement of moral thought. Penitents, of course, included all sorts of people. Yet each penitent appeared alone, as the doer of certain morally objectionable deeds. Hence, the only moral picture readily obtainable in the confessional was a picture taken of — or from the viewpoint of — an individual moral agent. Most of the sins confessed were, of course, actions that offended and injured other people, sometimes great numbers of other people and in extremely complicated ways. Yet, because none of those people was heard from, their moral perspectives could scarcely be introduced. Not surprisingly, then, Catholic moral thinking habitually understood sin in relation to sinners more than in relation to the victims of sinners. There were no plaintiffs and, apart from the defendant, who confessed and pleaded guilty, there were no witnesses. Even with maximum sincerity, such an arrangement is hardly calculated to generate a comprehensive picture of moral realities.

Penitents, it should also be recalled, came always, until very recently, as isolated individuals, to confess the particular individual deeds for which they sought forgiveness. Under such circumstances moral vision is seriously incapacitated for perceiving either morality or immorality as socially organized, institutionally entailed, ideologically sustained, or culturally perpetuated. To adopt familiar jargon, moral theology, as shaped by the exigencies of the confessional system, tended greatly to emphasize what may be called micro-morality, and to overlook macro-morality. Social sin, as it has come to be called, tended to slip through the meshes of the confessional system, and consequently to slip the minds of moral theologians and of Catholics who took their moral cues from them.

One last consideration along the same lines: what penitents were expected to report, and what confessors were expected to interpret, were not traits or tendencies of moral character, but particular misdeeds. One confessed what one was doing, not what one was becoming. Moral theology focused on rules rather than on virtues, and on the intermittent breaking of rules rather than on the progressive deterioration of character. By the same token, moral theology typically gave far more attention to doing things one should not do, than to not doing the things one should. The only sins of omission commonly attended to were those involving very precise, usually ritual, obligations.

THE FUNCTIONAL relationship between moral theology and the confessional system had far-reaching effects, both in assuring the relative invariance of Catholic moral thinking, and in skewing that thinking in a number of important ways. To recapitulate, among the changes in moral thinking that have recently been most conspicuous among Catholics, we can plainly see a number of reversals of, or compensations for the following five broadly-stated tendencies, separately or in combination:

- First, moral norms were regarded as a definite and permanent set of fixed statutes.
- Second, moral issues were interpreted with both insights and oversights typical of celibate, male clergy.
- Third, moral perspective was dominated by the viewpoint of agents of wrongdoing rather than that of sufferers from it.
- Fourth, sins were identified with individual misdeeds, with little attention to their involvement in social practices, policies, and structures.
- And fifth, immorality was thought of rather as a quality of actions than as a disposition of character.

It should be noted that the recent wave of change and diversification in Catholic moral thinking has been simultaneous with a rapid decline of moral theology, at least as traditionally understood, and with widespread neglect of sacramental confession, despite some interesting experiments in changing its procedures.

1. For quite some time now, there has been a widespread reluctance to attribute absolute validity to any but the most comprehensive moral norms. The most extreme reaction has been to discredit moral generalizations altogether, and then replace them all by a sweeping injunction to love. Very often, the obvious practical inadequacy of such an approach leads to interpreting love as that which contributes to happiness, thereby turning Christian morality into a pure consequentialism indistinguishable from secular utilitarianism. In more moderate circles, the tendency is to pay much more attention than formerly to proportional consequences, while honoring certain other norms as well.

2. For a somewhat shorter time, doubt has been cast on a number of familiar moral assumptions by a growing suspicion that they embody prejudices rooted in ignorance of typical female and conjugal experience, intensified by institutionally encouraged attitudes of authoritarian paternalism. Here the most extreme reactions have taken the form of ideological

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feminism and anti-clericalism. More balanced reactions have explored the effects of sexism on distributive justice, and cultivated a sexual and conjugal morality more sensitive to the realities of family life.

3. A subtler, more profound reassessment of moral priorities has been broached by deliberately adopting the outlooks and evaluations proper to those who may be described as morally victimized, those, that is, whose sufferings are intensified and whose decent aspirations are frustrated by the moral indifference and social irresponsibility of others, more fortunately situated.

4. Catholics are steadily becoming aware of the extent to which moral wrongdoing is rooted in corporate action or inaction, facilitated by social systems, and supported by underlying ideologies, mainly political and economic. Indeed, such wrongdoing may even be so effectively disguised by these same factors as to be commonly overlooked by the moral criticism of conscientious people. Altering those factors has come to be seen as a primary demand of social justice.

5. Several lines of thought, psychological and theological as well as ethical, have conspired in recent years to recommend the centering of moral assessment not on rules but on virtue. The basic idea is that moral goodness is primarily a quality of human lives, constituted not by a record of unbroken regulations, but by the cultivation and integration of certain basic habits, attitudes, and outlooks, of which conformity to rules is only one indication. Such goodness is adequately demonstrated only by the story of a life, in which not only overt action, but vision and expectation shape the evolution of a character within the unfolding of a plot.

What answer can be given to the very basic, practical question of whether Catholic moral thinking in recent years has been getting better or worse? I can only answer: both. All five of the trends I have described are, in my opinion, progressive. But at the same time, because they are a response to a given historical moment, they can be too readily exaggerated, and allowed to supersede rather than supplement elements of moral wisdom from the past.

In my own view, the most celebrated of modern trends in Catholic moral thinking, often called situation ethics, is the most superficial and least innovative. After all, throughout the entire history of Christianity, circumstantial limits to most moral rules have been readily admitted. Even the most venerable Christian moralists, for example, made lots of exceptions to "Thou shalt not kill," and at least a few to "Thou shalt not steal." The same cannot be said of "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and it is notorious that when situation ethicists get down to cases, it is very largely in the realm of sexual morality that they draw controversy and condemnation. We are thus reminded of that peculiar inflexibility which overtakes the traditional Roman Catholic moral theological mind whenever moral rules are rules affecting sexual behavior. Here, I suppose, is the most deplorable effect of a centuries-old hegemony of male celibates in moral theology.

Looking again at the kinds of exceptions to moral norms that have long been taken for granted, one notices that most of them have obviously been based on some kind of consequentialism and proportionalism, that is, on comparing, in particular circumstances, the values of what would happen if the norm were conformed with. That, for example, is clearly the basis on which moral approval has been given to thefts by the very poor from the very rich, and to lethal violence by defenders against aggressors. There is nothing new in principle about consequentialism and proportionalism, but only about certain of their applications. And it cannot be overlooked that here too, at least in official Catholic circles, it is about sex that nearly all the fuss is made.

Up to a point, consequentialism and proportionalism express sound common-sense morality. Obviously the foreseeable results of our actions should be major factors in judging their moral rightness or wrongness. It is elementary morality to try to do more good than harm. But it is not the whole of even elementary morality. The serious problems about consequentialism are not in the realm of sex, but in the realm of justice. For no one can realistically doubt that occasions can arise when doing something plainly unjust really is likely to accomplish more good than any alternative just behavior. That is not only how tyrants defend their disregard of human rights, but how terrorists opposing those tyrants defend their massacres of the innocent. It is also how governments defend mining foreign harbors, how tax-evaders defend cheating the public, how disciplinarians defend indiscriminate punishment, and how ideologues defend suppressing the truth. Within limits, consequentialism is indispensable to reasonable morality. Beyond those limits, it annihilates the sense of justice.

SUBTLER and more innovative than these trends is the tendency in modern Catholic moral thinking to adopt the perspective not only of those who perform moral or immoral actions, but also of those who are chiefly affected by them. Phrases like "option for the poor" and "solidarity with victims" are significant expressions of this perspective in recent Catholic social ethics. There is a growing awareness that, from the receiving end of morality and immorality, one gets a different view, and in some respects a clearer and truer one. Demands on our generosity or responsibility take on a completely different moral quality as we shift our focus from concentrating on our own limited resources to entering into the predicaments of those who ask us to share them. The closer one gets to the sufferer, the harder it becomes to refuse help. And the farther one stays from the sufferer, the farther one remains from the central moral reality of the situation. Thus we chase the beggars off our streets, keep the slums off our itineraries, and usher the helpless off our premises because their near presence mocks the complacency of our consciences.

Yet, even this wholesome trend of thought has, perhaps, a dark side in moral thinking. For, given our congenital egocentrism, it is an easy step from paying moral attention to the victimization of others, to thinking about our own moral situations more in passive than in active terms, that is, thinking of ourselves as the objects of other people's moral or immoral behavior.

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I think there is reason to fear something of this kind is occurring. The main indication I would point to is a change in the prevailing language of ordinary moral discourse. I have in mind the rapidly increasing frequency of references to rights, and a corresponding diminution of references to duties and obligations. This is a transferral of properly legal language to the realm of ethics. One thing to be said for the confessional system was that it required Catholics regularly to interrupt preoccupation with their rights and pay serious attention to their obligations. We may need to recall that. In a world where all moral thoughts were concerned with rights, and none with obligations, moral life would inevitably cease. The converse is not true.

Perhaps no recent trend has had greater impact on Catholic moral thinking than that which emphasizes the collective and socially structured nature of so much ethical behavior. The practical corollary is that our own responsibility concerning such actions depends on what we can do about the collectivities and social structures involved, and about our personal relations with them. Social justice, as a moral virtue, has come to be understood as a disposition, on the one hand, to try to make societies more just and, on the other, to detach oneself from societies bent on injustice. The velocity of progress in this regard is well demonstrated by attitudes towards conscientious objection, such a short time ago reprobated by the entire fraternity of Catholic moral theologians, and now enjoying praises and blessings from bishops, popes, and an ecumenical council. At the present time, the moral reinterpretation of political, economic, and professional life seems to be well under way.

The least developed, and in some ways the most interesting of the trends I have listed is the last one, with its reinterpretation of moral goodness as the development —over a course of time, experience, and choice — of a certain kind of human being. The interesting thing is that this point of view is not in the least *new* to Catholic thought, even though it is rather new to Catholic theorizing about morality and ethics. The fact is, if one wants to find Catholic thought of the kind here recommended, one can easily find it in any well-stocked Catholic library. To get to it, though, you must make a wide berth of the sections labeled "moral theology" and settle down among the volumes marked spirituality and hagiography. A long, long time ago, spirituality and moral theology went separate ways, eventually separating even more widely. Bringing them together again would be a natural result of addressing questions about what we ought to do with questions about what we are supposed to become. That, it seems to me, is the only possible way a distinctively Christian morality might come into being.

Dawn O'Leary

A Get-Well Note to Juan from the Governor

"Heart Attack May Delay Execution of a Murderer"
– Headline

For your recovery I make no promises,
in particular, no phone calls at dawn.
I've refused such before, and on the morning
of execution I made a point of rising
before daybreak, avoiding nothing. By breakfast's end
a cock crowed across the indigo hills
of this deep state, and I warmed
to think of its people waking sleepy
and safe in farmhouses, cities, and foothills
where the South is still the South,
and protects its own. No, I make no promises

save one: that if indeed
you slip over the high walls of justice,
an abyss awaits you on the other side.

For in some room above a storefront
a young man simmers, memorizing dents
in ashcans below his window.
And along some searing August beach
a man like yourself wanders, fists clenched
within his trouser pockets, waiting for the sky
to crack. Dimly in the background
of their capabilities, a radio plays, and they hear
of you, your subterfuge. They need
a certain kind of detail: stripes of pink light
along the prison floor. Your last piece
of toast. The telephone silent as the ways
of God . . . I could go on. Juan,
the triple bypass you refused
was deprivation to us all.
Heartbeeps on a screen that suddenly dive
and skid into oblivion will impress no one.

Perhaps while you recover
you will read the book I have enclosed.
Camus writes of the simple Meursault,
who murders a man in Algiers. Please note
that in the end he wishes only for a crowd
of onlookers at his execution. I guarantee you
more: Pickets. Reporters. Your mother.
Satellites that hum your name in space.
The priest we assign you will stay
all night, till the first light appears
thin as a wire along God's hills. Be there.

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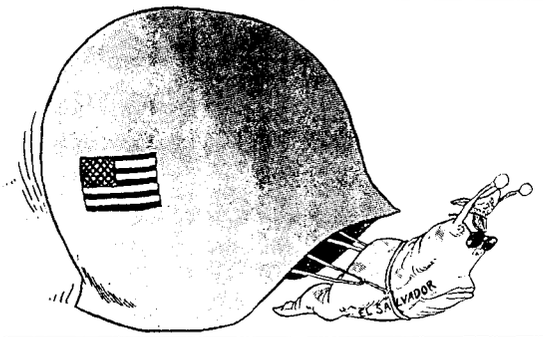

U.S. ROLE IN EL SALVADOR

The quagmire of dependency

JIM CHAPIN

"In El Salvador, it's good for your health to have an American connection."

Bernard Packer
Former head of AIFLD in El Salvador

EL SALVADOR has fallen out of the American media in the last two years. And it has fallen out of the American political process. These two facts are not unconnected. In the absence of serious American political discussion of events in El Salvador, the involvement of the United States in that country has steadily increased. While American politicians and journalists have exercised themselves over $100 million in aid to Nicaraguan *contras*, they have ignored the ever-growing commitment of the U.S. to the Duarte government in El Salvador, and where that commitment might lead. Other than occasional statements about Duarte and his struggle against the military (a struggle which goes nowhere), the media, lacking any clear "story line," has largely abandoned its coverage of the issues. With all but a few left-wing and New Right Congressmen supporting the Duarte government, American policy toward that country has not been subjected to any sustained criticism from main-stream politicians or journalists.

While our watchdogs in Congress and the media have been sleeping, the United States has taken on a role as the primary sponsor of the Duarte government exceeding that of even a few years ago. In 1985, U.S. aid to El Salvador topped half-a-billion dollars, more than $120 per Salvadoran, a level of support exceeded only by what we give to Israel. However, if one takes into account the higher GNP of Israel, U.S. aid to El Salvador is almost exactly equivalent: one-fifth of each country's GNP. It is a sum higher than the entire national budget of El Salvador a few years ago. Given this level of support, we shouldn't be surprised that El Salvador and Israel rank at the very top of the short list of countries that regularly support U.S. positions in the United Nations. The list would be much longer if we paid other countries at the same rate!

The conflict in El Salvador is going nowhere and going somewhere at the same time. Like most historical events, it leads in ambivalent directions, rather than providing the simple good guys/bad guys dichotomies beloved of American journalists, politicians, and public opinion. Just as the accession of Cory Aquino (with the support of the same military leaders who bolstered the Marcos regime for two decades) will not solve the problems of the Philippines, so Duarte's uneasy alliance with the military and the United States opened only the *possibility* of an end to the persistent conflict in El Salvador. Nothing that has happened in the last year would lead one to think that an end to the conflict is any nearer.

In fact, one can make a case that almost *every* force in El Salvador seems weaker now than a year ago, with two very important exceptions: the American government and the Salvadoran military which it sponsors. The continuance of the war over time has resulted in the destruction of the old Salvadoran oligarchy. The forces of the death squads have been politically scattered: the right-wing quasi-Fascist bloc built up by Roberto D'Aubuisson under the name of ARENA (Republican National Alliance) has shattered, with various individuals trying to pick up its pieces; and the traditional military-backed party, the PCN (Party of National Conciliation), collapsed in the 1985 election. The right wing has recourse to one remaining major political bastion: the legal system — the Supreme Court and the Attorney General's office — which has been threatening to overturn the 1979 nationalization of coffee, but has been thwarted by Duarte's intention to execute Phase II of the land reform.

The military has generally continued to protect former death-squad members, and no major figure has been successfully tried for anything up to and including killing Salvadoran archbishops and American nuns, shooting AFL-CIO representatives, or plotting to kill American ambassadors. Even so, the experience of the military in the years without an American presence has been so grim that the army has concluded that *nothing* can be allowed to interfere with the American pipeline, especially since the demands of the American masters are so limited in scope.

Even attempts to prosecute a gang who kidnapped rich businessmen for ransom have so far led nowhere. One major figure, Lt. Col. Roberto Mauricio Staben (a CIA favorite and commander of the American-trained Arce battalion) has already been released, and Rodolfo Isidro Lopez Sibrian (who was never punished for his role in killing AIFLD — American

JIM CHAPIN, *writer, political consultant, and a former national director of the Democratic Socialists of America, is the Chair of World Hunger Year.*

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Institute for Free Labor Development — workers) apparently will escape punishment.

The most dramatic event of the last year was the September 10, 1985 kidnapping of Duarte's daughter Ines, who had been his campaign manager in 1984. The FMLN (Farabundo Martí Liberation Front) held her for forty-four days, and was able to get a number of its people released in return for her. Many commentators have claimed that this episode demonstrated Duarte's power: the army was unhappy, to say the least, but had to succumb to the family interests of the president. Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa, who has always been an anti-Duarte lightning rod in the military, was violently critical. Ochoa was re-assigned to Washington, where he has so far failed to report.

The military remains unwilling to punish even the most flagrant violators of the law. But it has, under American pressure, reduced the level of terror in the country. In fact, on the two occasions when the military put its eggs in the basket of the (potentially anti-American) right, from 1972 to 1979, and again in 1982-84, the result was a vast increase in rebel strength that, according to some military analysts, came within a year or so of toppling the regime altogether. If anything, under Duarte and with American support, the military has become more powerful as an independent force in the last few years. Its "professionalization" may be laying the groundwork for it to function independently of the old oligarchy, just as the equally "professional" Chilean military has been functioning for the last dozen years.

At the height of death-squad activity, thousands of people died every year. Nothing like that is happening now. What is happening is rather interesting: a bifurcated and more sophisticated strategy which is a "clean-up" version of what the Guatemalan military successfully accomplished without much American aid. This strategy couples an easing of political restriction in the cities with an increase of violence in the rural areas.

In the Salvadoran version, increased violence does not involve mass slaughters of local Indian populations (most of them were killed in 1932), but only rare and probably not centrally planned incidents. More common is the policy of mass depopulation of the rural zones backing the rebels. That policy has known several phases. Until 1982 units of the armed forces would enter villages in search of the insurgents, often disrupting and displacing the populace. After 1982, this policy had to be abandoned in certain areas because rebel control had grown too strong. Since 1984, however, with the increased assistance of U.S.-supplied aircraft and bombers, the policy of depopulation has resumed in earnest. This so-called "clean warfare" relies on heavy bombing from above and the use of troops on the ground. The government has waged strong campaigns that have driven the rebels out of areas they had possessed for years, such as the Guazapa Volcano or parts of Chalatenango province. As a result, today half-a-million people, more than 10 percent of the country's population, are displaced persons.

American intervention in recent years has been more than military. It has taken place on a wide front. The theory of "low intensity conflict" — which was developed by French counter-insurgents in Algeria and Vietnam, then used by us in Vietnam, and now is being implemented by the Reagan administration all around the world — requires that we see the world as the Communists do, as total. *Everything* is grist for the conflict: religion, culture, the union movement, politics, etc. Here, as elsewhere, "anti-Communists" unwittingly make imitation the sincerest form of flattery.

The AFL-CIO, acting through the AIFLD, has worked to destroy the Popular Democratic Unity (UPD), the moderate labor union federation which it helped to put together in 1980. Why? Because that federation was not sufficiently pro-Duarte. Bernard Packer, the AIFLD representative in Salvador, began a group called the Democratic Workers' Federation in 1984. Although Packer himself became so controversial he had to be replaced, his policy remains. His group carried out a pro-Duarte rally three months ago.

The anti-Duarte elements of UPD joined with unions of teachers and public administrators to form the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) in February of this year. These groups carried out a number of larger and more enthusiastic anti-Duarte labor rallies on February 21, March 25, and on May Day. The old UPD unions (who were a major base of support for Duarte in 1984) have been unhappy not only with Duarte's economic policies and his failure to negotiate, but also with his use of security troops to smash strikes and with the torture by acid and electricity of some members and relatives. Chris Norton, writing in *NACLA Report on the Americas,* says the AFL-CIO has followed "the logic of recent U.S. policy in El Salvador. In many respects, the UPD has indeed functioned as the independent, centrist union which AIFLD worked twenty-three years to build. The problem is that in the context of a policy that has defined Duarte as the acceptable left end of the political spectrum, and then pulled him to the right, such a union base is seen as a dangerously destabilizing force."

Meanwhile, the newest aspect of American cultural imperialism, evangelical Protestantism, has moved into the country in a big way. USAID has signed a cooperation agreement allowing a Protestant group to distribute food to refugees, and the military has given them access to the camps, barracks, and jails, and has helped them on housing projects. According to Campus Crusade for Christ, the number of Protestant baptisms has risen from 70,000 in 1975 to 250,000 last year. They now claim that some 20 percent of the country's population are active members. Walter Dean Burnham has suggested that fundamentalist religion has filled the social space in the United States that in other countries would be filled by socialism, and now the Protestants in Central America seem to be consciously positioning themselves as anti-Marxists in support of American policy.

The Catholic church in El Salvador has been institutionally weak judging by the number of vocations to the priesthood, for example, even by normal Latin American standards. The relatively few priests and nuns cover the whole ideological

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spectrum from left to right, but it has been possible for the archbishops to emerge as the voice of "moderate" public opinion. Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, perhaps responding to the murder of his predecessor, Archbishop Oscar Romero, has been more cautious. He supported the Christian Democrats fairly strongly until this year, but has distanced himself increasingly, condemning the indiscriminate bombing of civilians by the government air force, but also condemning the attacks on the economy by the guerrillas.

American aid has not overcome the decline in the economy. Inflation has run at 30 percent a year. Unemployment and underemployment are estimated at 50 percent. Real income has dropped 30 percent so far in this decade. And the largest American firm in the country, Texas Instruments, has just closed its factory. Duarte, under pressure from his American paymasters, has had to devalue the currency and raise taxes. The only economic good news has been the Brazilian drought which has doubled the price that El Salvador can get for its coffee exports.

As Duarte has been pulled right by the pressure of U.S./IMF economic policies and urged to compromise with the army and the political right, some of the space to his immediate left has opened. There have been public protest marches and strikes, something one did not see much of at the height of the death squads. Political groups just to the left of Duarte, the social democratic and Christian democratic wings of the FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front), have made tentative appearances in the capital for the first time in five years. Their representatives met with representatives of Duarte in Lima this April, and Duarte, on the second anniversary of his election as president (June 1), called once more for negotiations. Guillermo Ungo of the FDR responded with guarded hope.

Meanwhile, the FMLN, faced with the collapse of its military strategy, has retreated from the Nicaraguan/Cuban example to the Vietnamese example. In a way it is an ironic choice, for the Vietnamese never fully realized how vast American firepower was, and they, too, kept getting trapped into direct confrontations with it.

El Salvador is a tiny country, the size of Massachusetts, with about one-fourteenth the population of Vietnam (which is the thirteenth most populous nation in the world). Despite American attempts to make Nicaragua into the "North Vietnam" of the conflict, the analogy fails. Nicaragua does not border El Salvador, and the two nations which do (Honduras and Guatemala) are both American allies. As long as we are willing to continue to increase aid at the present rate — and if necessary to back it up with American troops — the blunt fact is that given the present circumstances *no government can come to power in El Salvador without at least American toleration.*

The FMLN, not fully wanting to recognize this state of affairs, has decided to "come out of the closet" and to form a single Marxist-Leninist party. This should be an interesting enterprise, since many of the leaders and parties involved have been as willing to kill each other as to kill government forces. At a meeting of the five FMLN organizations in Perquin last summer, it was agreed that the purely military struggle had failed, and that it was time for a prolonged popular struggle. The new slogan is "one party, one army, until the taking of power." As always, the Salvadoran rebels, reflecting the grimmer history of their nation, have been less attractive and more bloodthirsty than the Sandinistas.

The political wing of the revolutionary movement, the FDR, has been unhappy with the evolution of the Marxist-Leninist military wing, but it has even less power (lacking a United States base) to influence them than Duarte does the army. When Duarte came to power, he had a strong base of support in El Salvador. The direction of the last year's politics has narrowed that base. More and more, the key to Duarte's position is in Washington. Instead of building a strong political system in El Salvador, what we have done is to create a government and military that is totally dependent upon us.

ONE MIGHT be forgiven for thinking that this war will go on forever with no result (even the archbishop has spoken despairingly of the war as "apocalyptic and interminable"), but in fact we should remember that the revolutionary forces have at least twice come somewhat close to victory, once in 1979-80, and once at the end of 1983. On each occasion the United States increased the level of its involvement and stopped them. But when the government drifts to the right (or, as now, is pulled there by its American sponsors) the rebel forces gain strength and the U.S. must escalate its efforts to maintain the government in power.

This, not anything that has happened or may happen in Nicaragua, is the "Vietnam model." For that reason alone, we should pay more attention to what is happening in El Salvador. Even a "pocket Vietnam" is a pocket we should avoid.

The choices before the United States are not easy. Duarte appears to be an arrogant and often inefficient man who insists on trying to run his government single-handedly. His party, unable to carry out the policy of its natural constituency, is tending to become a collection of corrupt hangers-on. So far,

EVEN AS THE latest attempts at negotiations between the Duarte government and the revolutionary front appear to have come to nought, pressures on religious groups in El Salvador grow ominous. Accusations that church human-rights groups are linked to the rebels have come from three women rights workers who were jailed by the government, then freed in exchange for public confessions of guerrilla connections. Church officials have denied the accusations (although it is common sense to assume that in a civil-war climate their agencies might well be infiltrated by *both* rebel and government agents) and have expressed concern that "to call someone a Communist here is practically a death sentence." The government and the U.S. embassy are publicizing the accusations widely — but without instituting any judicial process to prove them. A number of church workers have received death threats.

THE EDITORS

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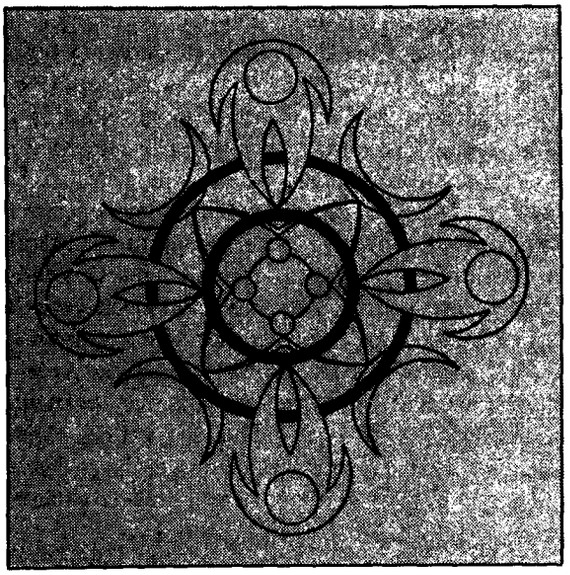

Vision/ quest

IN THESE TIMES, LET THERE BE SIGHT:

- **Sidney Callahan** — ***Abortion & the Sexual Agenda***
- **Edward R.F. Sheehan** — ***The Battle for Nicaragua***
- **Steven Englund** — ***Lustiger, Cardinal of Paris***
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the United States is supporting Duarte "the way a rope supports a hanged man": by pushing him to carry out unpopular right-wing economic policies, limiting his ability to control the army (most of our military aid goes directly to the armed forces rather than through civilian government), and opposing any serious negotiations with the rebels.

As for the revolutionaries, Edward Sheehan, whose low opinion of the Sandinistas is known to readers of this magazine, has suggested that "in power, the FMLN might make the Sandinistas seem like Swedish Socialists." I would agree, with the single qualification of removing the "might." The violence that the Marxist-Leninist wing of the FMLN has shown toward the general population and towards each other has no parallel in Sandinista behavior.

This is not to say that negotiations serve no purpose. Neither the army nor the FMLN can win the military struggle (unless the U.S. withdraws its aid to the army). The ironic effect of present American policies is to complete a "forced-draft" urbanization and "modernization" of El Salvador, by destroying the rest of the traditional peasant base of the Salvadoran society. The effect of "liberalization" in the cities is to allow an expression of attitudes to the left of those the U.S. government wants, but these attitudes can only be suppressed by letting the death squads go back to their old ways.

THE present situation in El Salvador limits American options. We cannot abruptly withdraw our support. Aside from the level of American credibility already invested in the regime, a victory for forces (which at their best are roughly equivalent to those presently ruling Vietnam) would be bad for El Salvador, bad for the U.S., and bad for Central America. We can't continue the present policy of indefinitely increasing support for the government, because that decreases both the government's real domestic strength and its room to maneuver with flexibility. If the Salvadoran government thinks our support is unlimited, it has no incentive and no ability to make necessarily difficult changes.

We need to put our aid through the civilian, not the military, sector, and at the same time insure that the money not be used to create a "kleptocracy" (a government made rich by stealing from its people) dependent upon us for its very survival. We need to support a domestic force for peace in El Salvador, and we have to understand that if there is no such force there, then our effort is wasted. Our policy of demanding a victory *and* an end to the death squads at the same time simply can't work: death squads are the price of "victory." Liberalization permits rising left-wing opposition, which, denied political space, will find military space. The natural direction of a military-dominated regime is a slide to the right, which reduces government support.

The U.S. can't demand a "frozen social revolution" as the price of our continued support. We must allow a real opportunity for all political forces (including Marxist, Leninist, and Communist) to push their case, else the war will go on indefinitely. We have to deal with the reality that a liberalized political system will probably not produce a capitalist political economy. The "capitalist" (in many ways pre-capitalist) economy in El Salvador that exists today is the result of generations of savage repression. Lifting that repression will probably not produce a result satisfactory either to political conservatives at home or even to moderate Democrats.

The United States under Reagan, here and elsewhere, is seeking victory when it should be seeking peace. "Perpetual war for perpetual peace" increases rather than reduces Soviet influence, because it confronts the Soviets in the arenas where they function best: social wars and weaponry. Where our society functions best is in the arts of peace: business, communications, and culture. In effect, peace would be our best "weapon." But the Reagan administration, wedded to a strange admiration of their alleged Communist foes, wants nothing so much as to imitate them. We must hope that the next U.S. administration will not attempt to "build democracy" as we are now doing in El Salvador: by substituting our dollars and military support for the social base that an indigenous democracy requires. It is an appealing shortcut, but a fatal one.

Dance

RED SHOES

THE KIROV STILL SHINES

IN 1964 when Leningrad's Kirov Ballet last visited the United States, it was the leading company in the Soviet Union. Today it is not. It is still a good company but circumstance and design have eroded its position. As the inheritor and standard-bearer of the traditions of the Imperial Maryinsky Ballet, it was always looked upon with some suspicion and jealousy by the restored capital city, Moscow. Systematically in the twenties and thirties, leading dancers were transferred from Leningrad to Moscow. Stalin was particularly fond of the artistry of Galina Ulanova, and she found herself assigned to the Bolshoi after dazzling Leningrad audiences.

National and international ballet competitions in the Soviet Union are held in Moscow. It is no surprise therefore that Russian medalists often find their way into the Bolshoi rather than back to their home companies, no matter where they have received their training. Thus it was that two of the 1973 finalists, Nadezda Pavlova (gold medal) was assigned to the Bolshoi and Olga Chenichikova (silver) ended up with the Kirov. Both had been trained at the Perm school which had been established by Kirov teachers when the company was evacuated to that city during the siege of Leningrad in World War II. A special irony is that Chenichikova's natal city is Moscow.

In addition to transfers of established and rising talents, the Kirov has lost many of its top dancers to the West through defections. Among the most noted of these have been Rudolph Nureyev, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Natalia Makarova. The

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tragic self-inflicted death of Yuri Soloviev during this period further depleted the ranks of the principal dancers.

Withal, the Kirov is still a major company because of its sound school curriculum and traditions. It was the school that produced Nijinsky, Anna Pavlova, Michael Fokine, and George Balanchine. Though no dancers and choreographers of their level are currently visible, the body of the company is strong. The corps de ballet is what the company wisely chose to feature on its first North American tour in twenty-two years.

The two programs given in the United States consisted of the full-length "Swan Lake" and exerpts from "La Bayadere," "Paquita," and Fokine's moodily romantic "Les Sylphides." The company had originally agreed to appear only in Vancouver as part of Canada's International Exposition. The summit meeting between the U.S. and USSR produced a climate in which the Kirov's visit could be expanded to include the United States. The hastily arranged tour included Los Angeles, Washington, Philadelphia, and Trenton. There were no sustained seasons possible elsewhere because of the lateness in booking the tour. Trenton was given a single matinee which was meager, but more than major cities like New York and Chicago, which didn't have a suitably-sized theater available on such short notice.

The impressions one derived varied from place to place, depending on what the Kirov directors chose to present by way of featured artists. In Philadelphia where I saw the company, Galina Mezentseva danced the lead in "The Shades" act of "La Bayadere." She is currently the leading dancer of the company by virtue of the numbers of performances and leading roles she is assigned, but her style is jarringly at odds with the lyrical "singing" line one associates with the Kirov. Hers is a hard, tough attack, one which takes a role by storm rather than winning it with a more subtle approach. Since she has a favored position in the company, this approach has effected changes in other leading dancers so that mechanical brilliance is now prized more than the glow of softer phrasing.

Lyubov Kunakova danced the Odette/Odile of "Swan Lake" with a similar steely determination partnered by a less than top rank Siegfried, Evgeny Neff. However, in both the mixed bill and the full-length "Swan Lake," the corps de ballet provided an undercurrent of security to the thin ranks of the principals. The entrance of the twenty-eight members of the corps de ballet in the opening moments of "The Shades" act, with their endlessly repeated attitude-renversé sequence, was a demonstration of the school at its best. The ensemble feeling was strong, placement secure, and positions taken with textbook clarity. It is spectacular, but quietly so, and also reassuring. The essential Kirov is still intact no matter what the idiosyncracies of the principals. (There are promising young newcomers in the company, but none was seen in featured roles in Philadelphia.) They may be enthralled by the vertiginous look of ice-skating-styled turns and snapped-out arm gestures of insect quickness at the expense of organically developed gesture, but the Kirov will survive them as it has survived forced transfers, defections, suicide, and Moscow's envy.

DON McDONAGH

Screen

COURTSHIP CASUALTIES

'LAST NIGHT' & 'HEARTBURN'

ABOUT LAST NIGHT is a love story, loosely based on David Mamet's play *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. A fuss was made about the change in title, with some ascribing it to the studio's fear about placing ads and gathering publicity. In truth, the new title fits a new creation, which borrows Mamet's characters, his keen ear for spoken English, and the outline of his story about young singles on the prowl. *About Last Night* substitutes a happy ending, which one can either attribute to Hollywood convention or the screenwriters' (Denise DeClue and Tom Kazurinsky) and director's (Ed Zwick) healthy dissent from the predictable pessimism that is by now a literary convention.

The change makes possible one of the more convincing recent film romances. The conflict of commitment and sexual freedom is explored, if not profoundly, at least intelligently. The leads are played by Rob Lowe and Demi (rhymes with "the-me" generation) Moore, whose previous roles have merely exploited their fashionable looks. In *About Last Night*, Lowe plays a young businessman reluctant to commit himself to Moore, an advertising assistant who finds herself, despite initial casualness, loving him too much. They both manage to project genuine amorous "chemistry," a rare commodity in some big-name romances in recent films. They even fight well, rarer yet when most screen blow-ups seem contrived.

Moore, in particular, displays good timing and delivery. When her boss, an ex-lover, pressures her for sex and claims that they once had something (in the vernacular) "kinda special," she corrects him with, "and kinda sleazy and kinda over." Later, reflecting on a Thanksgiving dinner she cooks to please Lowe, she laments, "It's official. I have become my mother." Like Debra Winger, Moore complements a husky voice and sultry all-American looks with (kinda) brains.

The screenplay, moreover, retains Mamet's tart view of two "friends" figures, Lowe's macho drinking pal, played by Jim Belushi, and Moore's man-hating roommate, Elizabeth Perkins. The closer the lovers get, the more their friends attempt to sabotage them and preserve less complicated friendships. Like his late brother, Belushi can play a vulgarian with both a disgusting and funny comic extravagance. Perkins has the harder, killjoy role, but wins more sympathy.

Some viewers might be offended by the film's unstinting use of four-letter words and Belushi's male-locker-room view of sex. More annoying is the film's longwindedness (it's easily half an hour too long), obligatory rock music, predictable fight on New Year's Eve, and silly scenes of Lowe roaming rainy streets when he realizes he's made a mistake rejecting love. A

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better film would have explored problems of complementarity, not just commitment.

Still, *About Last Night* has certain strengths. Editing saves narrative at two points where romances often bog down: sex and (far more traumatic these days) moving in. Instead of extended love scenes, the film cuts between a few suggestive erotic shots and domestic snippets of Moore making the bed or Lowe running out half-naked to grab the morning paper. Like the suggestiveness of old-fashioned Hollywood romances, which left the bedroom to the imagination, the editing excites us to want to learn more about the lovers, not simply see more of them.

Also refreshing was the use of some local Chicago color. But *About Last Night* is not — as Chicago critics Siskel and Ebert claim — the best picture of the year. It's good, "kinda."

HEARTBURN IS based on Nora Ephron's slimly disguised novel about her marriage to and divorce from Watergate journalist Carl Bernstein. It is another Big Name Release that disappoints. Ephron wrote the screenplay, but omits much of her book's naughty zest and acute notations on how large a role food plays in courtship and cohabitation. Indeed, her heroine, played by Meryl Streep, is not well identified as a food columnist and not even endowed with any real show of wit until midway through the film. Discovering American Express slips used for assignations by her husband, Jack Nicholson, she complains, "You couldn't even use cash, like a normal philanderer." But the line falls flat, because she hasn't been established as a comic presence.

Ephron can write comedy, and Nicholson and Streep can act it. (Indeed, comedy was her theatrical trademark.) So what went wrong? Perhaps the problem lies in the autobiographical particularity of the story itself or the author's success in creating a "mensch" voice in prose that perfectly balances comedy and anger. Someone, either Ephron or Director Mike Nichols, also erred by opening the film with Streep and Nicholson's courtship, rather than the book's more dramatic opening *in medias res*, after their marriage and first child. Most scenes early in the film are static, even a key episode where Streep, suddenly seized with distrust, delays the wedding by hiding in her room. The fine supporting cast (Stockard Channing, Richard Masur, Jeff Daniels, Milos Forman) appear initially only as an undifferentiated mass of friends.

There are several awful early scenes. Nichols and Ephron use the crutch of a political dinner to show how Streep suffers in Washington. They film terrible segments in New York when Streep first takes flight: she is made to run about scatterbrained, and a fine supporting actor, Steven Hill, is given some abruptly sloppy characterization as her madcap father. They gamble badly when Nicholson sings some baby songs with an exaggerated basso after he learns Streep is pregnant. Whoever laughs at this scene has fallen into the trap of thinking it must be funny because The Great Rascal, Jack Nicholson, is crooning. At this point, star vehicle overwhelms story.

Childbirth, however, saves *Heartburn*; when Streep undergoes a Caesarian, something about the risks involved in marriage gets through. Once she's allowed to be mischievous, Streep provides some zing, especially in a supermarket when, wheeling child about, she spreads mean rumors about her husband's mistress. Midway, help finally comes from the supports, mostly Channing detailing her means of avenging infidelity, and Catherine O'Hara, who steals all her scenes as a smarmy, gossipy TV journalist. John Wood also amuses with a brilliant imitation of Alistair Cooke when Streep fantasizes her marital woes on Masterpiece Theater.

The end also achieves some power. After a dinner with friends, Streep soliloquizes on the burden of trusting in marriage, all the while eyeing a Key lime pie. It's the best use of food and best moment in *Heartburn*, the only time it resonates with wide significance and attains balanced focus. But again Nichols shoots the scene statically: just at the moment we want to see Streep's effect in the eyes of the other diners, the camera refrains from a pan, focusing just once or twice on Nicholson.

What makes a man like Nicholson tick? Why can't some husbands with lovely wives and good marriages be faithful? Neither in the film nor in the book is there any attempt to explore these questions. The husband is simply The Enemy. Okay, but this thin characterization is not as noticeable in prose as in film, where Nicholson, after early displays of his rascally energy, is reduced to a cipher. When we last see him, he's left, literally, with nothing to do. The mistake of filming the initial courtship dovetails at this point with the mistake of casting the Big Star. It would have been wiser to keep the husband's role small to begin with, or to choose a lesser name to fill it. That's not Hollywood. TOM O'BRIEN

Sister Mary Lucina

Calling You

They took ten phones out, piled
them in a box in the hall. Thought
they were rubbers no one claimed
until I got closer and heard
ringing from around the country.
Can't disconnect voices telling
of vacation plans changed to flat
tires, of arthritis continuous as
wires on poles, of stores spread
with jellies of children.

The new phones after learning
our alphabet will know us the way
teachers did when we sat
in the rows of their foreheads.
Dial tone is working but not
your voice. Going back to the box
I call you. Your words fluff my rooms
like curtains in a breeze. Now I
know why these phones aren't rubbers.
No box could hold the silence.

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The dark side of the boom

ROGER COPELAND

MORE AND MORE often these days, we hear it said that the American dance boom of the 1970s has gone bust. In fact, a sizable portion of the dance community now waxes nostalgic for that golden age (a mere decade ago) when it was virtually impossible to browse through a newspaper or magazine without encountering an article titled (something like) "American Dance Grows by Leaps and Bounds." But did American dance really make such a leap forward, and if so, was it really a cause for celebration?

The statistics, rounded up to support the more hyperbolic claims about American dance in the 1970s, varied a bit depending upon who provided them. But all led inevitably to the same cheery, upbeat conclusion: that dance was the fastest growing and most popular of the performing arts in America. In 1978, Livingston Biddle, the then newly-appointed head of The National Endowment for the Arts, declared proudly that

> Dance, more than any other area of the arts, is in a boom or growth cycle. If you look at the history of the growth of institutions in the last eleven years, orchestras have doubled in number, and opera companies have almost doubled in number; resident professional theaters have quadrupled from twelve to fifty. But dance companies have increased from ten to seventy, so it's a seven-fold increase, at a higher rate than any of the other performing arts and the audience for dance has increased by the same kind of ratio.

The turning point in this saga was probably none other than *The Turning Point*, the popular Hollywood film featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov, which premiered, not coincidentally, just a few months before Livingston Biddle's sanguine proclamation. But evidence of the boom was not confined to Hollywood. It was visible virtually anywhere one cared to look: In the tremendous success of Public Television's "Dance in America" series, in long-running Broadway musicals like *A Chorus Line* and Bob Fosse's *Dancin'* that were fueled primarily by high-octane dancing, in pricey new perfumes with names like "Pavlova" and "Cabriole," in television commercials featuring performers purporting to be dancers who peddled everything from Maxwell House Coffee to Stayfree Maxi Pads, and in a flurry of hastily concocted dime novels attempting to cash in on the newly discovered glamour and backstage intrigue of big-time ballet (these potboilers, by the way, often came complete with Russian defectors, CIA and KGB agents). Less spectacularly, the dance boom also brought us postage stamps commemorating various varieties of American dance, new hybrid entertainment forms like John Curry's "Ice Dancing," and last — as well as least — the fervid phenomenon of disco dancing.

It's worth recalling that *Saturday Night Fever* and *The Turning Point* were released almost simultaneously. And if Baryshnikov set out to demonstrate that male ballet dancers could be aggressively heterosexual, that real men sometimes wear tights even if they don't eat quiche, John Travolta accomplished something similar in *Saturday Night Fever* — reassuring working-class youth that it was perfectly, acceptably macho to dress up like a peacock while strutting one's stuff at the disco on a feverish Saturday night. Subsequently, the film *Flashdance* tried to pass itself off as a hybrid of the two, suggesting that blue collar balletomania is not a contradiction in terms. (*Flashdance* was also instrumental in helping to popularize break dancing, which ushered in the final phase in the de-sissification of dance — transforming competitive street dancing into a fully accredited form of macho one-upmanship.)

Obviously, many of these phenomena contributed a good deal more to the history of fashion than to the history of serious choreographic art. *Flashdance* was a case in point: It will be remembered primarily not for its dancing, but for that loose-fitting, slung-off-the-shoulder-sweatshirt popularized by Jennifer Beals.

But even after we've peeled away the layers of hype and separated the choreographic wheat from the merely-fashionable chaff, there's still no disputing the fact that America has become the dance capital of the world. We have the best and most versatile dancers, the largest and most enthusiastic audiences, and — above all — the most innovative and prolific choreographers to be found anywhere in the world. Even people not

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readily disposed to displays of patriotism tend to concur on this point. Susan Sontag, for example, recently had occasion to observe:

> When I travel, as I often do, and fall into conversation about American arts, as often happens, I generally find that people abroad vastly overestimate us. . . . Yet it is my perverse, rather than patriotic, pleasure to end up pointing out that there is one art at which we really are better than anyone else. There is one and there is only one and it is dance. Dance is the one art where Americans are, and have been for some time, doing the best work in the world . . . I'm not going to make any Whitmanesque declarations about why dance should inevitably have found its place here, in this encyclopedic country. I want simply to note our good fortune.

But is it possible that what Sontag calls our good fortune is really the result of our bad habits? Is there, in other words, a dark side of the boom? This is the question that almost never gets asked by celebrants of the American dance boom.

FIRST, to place this question in the proper context and perspective, it's essential to recognize that the so-called boom of the 1970s did not emerge suddenly and unexpectedly as if from nowhere, but was rather the crest of a wave that had been accumulating momentum for some time. As early as 1963, Walter Terry had written in *The New York Herald Tribune* that "Ballet in America is booming today as never before." When we take a longer view of these matters, it becomes evident that the American fascination with dance has been an established fact for some time now. When the renowned romantic ballerina, Fanny Elssler, first performed in Boston, Margaret Fuller is said to have exclaimed, "This is poetry." To which Ralph Waldo Emerson replied, "No, this is religion!" — a casual remark that nonetheless demonstrated how easily dance can stir religious feelings in a culture bent on repudiating the belief that the soul is some ethereal essence that yearns, to escape from and transcend the body. As Christianity, with its belief in the transcendence of the body, begins to soften its grip on the imagination, we become increasingly receptive to D.H. Lawrence'e belief that the soul is *in* the body.

Isadora Duncan, the rhapsodic earth mother of American modern dance, claimed that in her very own solar plexus she had discovered nothing less than the temporal home of the soul. And today, when Americans speak of someone or something as having "soul," they refer not to the lily-white, sublimated, Platonic soul, but rather to a physically-palpable, bodily energy derived from rhythm-and-blues, Gospel music, and other manifestations of Afro-American culture. T.S. Eliot, American by birth, European by inclination, once complained that "Our literature is a substitute for religion and so is our religion." Today in America, the same can be said of dance. In America today, we worship at the shrine of the body.

"In the United States," Roland Barthes once observed, "sex is everywhere, except in sexuality." And dance of course, is one of the most prominent of those substitute, displaced sites. In a culture hungry for vicarious sexual substitutes, for images of physical fulfillment unattainable in the bedroom, the arts in which the idealized human body is most prominent — arts like dance and the cinema — are destined to become immensely popular. Dance has an enormous, built-in advantage over the other arts in this regard. Note, too, the peculiar way in which the mandates of artistic modernism in dance have unwittingly conspired with the forces of sexual consumerism. In every other art, the spirit of modernist abstraction, coupled with the impulse to pare away everything not essential to the medium, resulted in the virtual elimination of the human figure — a tendency that did not exactly ingratiate itself to the mainstream audience. But in the art of dance — where the bare-bones essence of the medium *is* the human body — the elimination of "non-essentials" (decor, character, story, mime, period costume) work to *reveal* the human figure more fully and more palpably than it has ever been revealed before. (They don't call those costumes "tights" for nothing.)

Certainly, even at its flashy worst, American choreography is more than a peep show with class; yet it's hard to deny that the basic, stripped-down uniform of the contemporary dancer, the ubiquitous Balanchinian practice clothes of tights and leotards, tantalize in much the same way that lingerie ads do — that is: they present the body in a state of simultaneous dress and undress, both erotic and coyly decorous at the same time. It is of course essential to acknowledge that much of the most ambitious choreography created in America during the 1960s and 70s was itself a reaction against the manifold vulgarities of the dance boom. Yvonne Rainer, for example, spoke for a whole generation of "post-modern" choreographers when she declared her "rage at the impoverishment of ideas, narcissisms, and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing . . ." The starkly anti-voluptuous quality of much early post-modern dance was a conscious repudiation of this exhibitionism.

Such exhibitionism is, at worst, a minor dishonesty. But there is — just as surely — a much darker side to the dance boom: specifically, the fact that the rising fortunes of American dance are directly, statistically proportional to the declining standards of American literacy. Is it simply coincidental that during the years in which American dance went from rags-to-riches, SAT scores and standardized testing in general faltered significantly? Dance is the ideal mode of expression for a culture (really a *counter*-culture) that babbles on about the primacy of "communication" while consistently denigrating the communicative powers of spoken and written language. In the political arena, Americans have always been uncomfortable with genuine eloquence. We tend to prefer the heartfelt gropings of inarticulate "sincerity." Think of those gawky, mumble-mouthed Frank Capra heroes pitted against the silken smoothies who speak with forked, but velvety tongues.

In both theater and film, our most cel-

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ebrated performers are "method" actors for whom bodily tics and behavioral mannerisms are considered more revealing of character than the spoken text. (Quintessentially, think of Brando's business with his T-shirt in *Streetcar*.) Dance owes much of its current popularity to the widespread perception that it's not only non-verbal, but anti-verbal, that it constitutes a form of *natural* language — pre-verbal, trans-cultural, and authentically keyed to the nuances of individual human feeling. Loie Fuller, the pioneer of American modern dance, once declared that "Motion and not language is truthful." It may be that dance is the only art form that benefits — not from illiteracy per se — but from the *decline* of literacy and verbal skills.

And to the generation for whom leisure reading has been replaced almost entirely by leisure viewing, dance is the live art form that appears to have the most in common with television. Those whose attention span has been all but destroyed by a steady diet of television and who instinctively prefer the visual to the verbal, will feel right at home with the fast-popping, gourmet eye-food served-up by so many contemporary choreographers.

Much like television which promises us the news "*live* at five," dance is a medium that glorifies the present, one that celebrates the flicker of evanescence and continual change. Dance is undeniably the most "perishable" of the arts; it offers us the aesthetic equivalent of planned obsolescence.

Americans are particularly fond of this now-you-see-it, now-you-don't disappearing act that constitutes an essential feature of the dance experience. It's a way of guaranteeing that dance remains as fully as possible in "the present tense." But it's also — perhaps unwittingly — a way of guaranteeing that the history of dance remains less tangible and less knowable than that of any other art form. Such obsessive fascination with the present almost always implies contempt for the past; and the sad fact of the matter is that the number of pre-twentieth century dances still being performed today is miniscule. (Imagine the effect on artists like Picasso, Stravinsky, Joyce, and Pound if the histories of painting, music, the novel, and poetry were comparably impoverished.) This leads to a question: Is this sort of historical amnesia an unavoidable fact of choreographic life, or do dancers and choreographers actually prefer it that way?

To be sure, dance is a notoriously difficult art to "notage" accurately on paper. But it's equally true that many dancers and choreographers *like* to work from a tabula rasa, even if that sometimes means reinventing the wheel. Isadora Duncan, who sought to create a quintessentially American form of dance, also steadfastly refused to have her dances recorded or preserved. As André Levinson once noted, "She was the product of a race that had no past." Is it any wonder then that dance, the art that consumes its own past, thrives in America, the country that has no past?

THIS self-immolating aspect of dance also greatly complicates the act of dance-viewing. Moving targets are hard to hit; and any art form that glides past the spectator's eye as swiftly and fleetingly as dance does requires highly developed skills of looking. But ironically, the very factors that make dance so excruciatingly difficult to see clearly also help make it a particularly undemanding art for the perceptually lazy. The paradoxical fact of the matter is that dance can also be enjoyed passively, without any exertion of intellect or sensorium. As a result, there's probably no other art in which the gap between the cognoscenti and the dilettantes is so vast.

The very sort of modernist strategies that caused so much consternation among audiences in the other arts wound up facilitating rather than challenging a growing perceptual laziness among dancegoers. In the other modernist arts, the abandoning of traditional narrative conventions left many audiences feeling as if they'd been cast adrift. But in dance, the emergence of a formalist, non-narrative aesthetic resulted in a much-appreciated reprieve from the obligation to interpret (or even follow!) the thought-line of the dance. Contemporary dance audiences seem to relish the fact that when a dance concert is over they don't feel any sort of obligation to *say anything* about it.

Dance is a respectable form of anti-intellectualism. Its message, all too often, comes down to this: man cannot live by head alone. Nothing wrong with that in principle, but the problem, of course, is that anti-intellectualism has always been the rule in America, not the exception. What the dance world's Dionysian missionaries don't realize is that they're preaching to the already-converted.

No consideration of the dance boom would be complete without at least some mention of the current cult of health and physical fitness. Recently, the fitness fad has merged with the dance boom to produce new hybrid forms of exercise: "Jazzercise," "Dancercise," "Aerobicise," etc. — all devoted to getting and keeping the body down-to-size. The motives for this merger seem obvious enough. Exercise reeks of hard work, but dance sounds like fun. Still, there's more than a quest for fitness involved here. Much more.

The popularity of jogging and running, for example, began to soar in the 1970s as younger Americans increasingly redirected their energies and attention away from the public sector and onto themselves. As if to say: "We were wrong to believe — as we did in the sixties — that an organism as complex as society can be perfected, but perhaps these same utopian energies can find fulfillment when lavished on one's self." Utopianism, even re-directed, re-defined utopianism, is probably much too generous a description of this phenomenon. Narcissism sounds more like it, but that also sounds glib. And yet, what we're really talking about is a retreat from the

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body politic into the body; and it may be that the deeper link between the dance boom and the popularity of jogging and exercise more generally is not their mutual physicality, but the relative ease with which both promote a turning inward, a retreat from the world-at-large.

The dancer is in many ways the very embodiment of Narcissus. Our stereotypical image of the ballet dancer — which, as it turns out, is not all that wide of the mark — is of someone who spends all day perfecting his or her image *in a mirror*. And when it comes to shutting out the rest of the world beyond the self, the ballet barre is infinitely more successful than the neighborhood bar. If one drinks to forget, might one dance to avoid "knowing" in the first place? Needless to say, the dancer's all-consuming daily routine is no picnic. In fact, it's an ordeal of self-sacrifice. But at the same time, there's no denying that it appeals to people with a strong, solipsistic urge to retreat from the outside world.

The widespread perception of dance as an apolitical, narcissistic art form accounts in large part for the willingness of Exxon and other major corporations to lavish so many of their tax-deductible dollars on it. Of course, from the corporations' not-entirely-disinterested point of view, it doesn't hurt one bit that the best known names in American dance — the household names like Nureyev, Makarova, Baryshnikov — invariably belong to Russian defectors. Thus, in the public mind at least, American dance becomes associated with the flight toward freedom. (Note how prominently Baryshnikov was displayed — both as dancer and as freshly-minted U.S. citizen — during Liberty Weekend.)

Ultimately, dance thrives in this country because it provides such concrete, but undidactic metaphors for the American conception of freedom, a yearning that manifests itself primarily in the pursuit of (bodily) happiness and in physical mobility. Social advancement in America is invariably a matter of "mobility" (if not upward, then at least horizontal). We feel most free when we're "on the move." Our sprawling national geography beckons us to assert our freedom by asserting our mobility, by indulging our fear of stillness and our mania for motion. Dance, the art of bodies filling space and time, has found its happiest home in the nation that equates freedom with the conquest of physical space, the nation whose manifest destiny extends all the way to the moon.

Books: OBSTRUCTING AGGRESSION

MAKING EUROPE UNCONQUERABLE
THE POTENTIAL OF CIVILIAN-BASED DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE
Gene Sharp
Ballinger, $14.95, 250 pp.

Leon V. Sigal

CIVILIAN-BASED deterrence and defense is an idea whose time has come, at least in Europe, where it has been the object of more and more serious attention. Yet attention has thus far been confined largely to opponents of current NATO strategy, much as the idea of "no first use" has on this side of the Atlantic. Like "no first use," civilian-based defense provides a critical tool for pointing up the flaws in current NATO strategy by posing an alternative that cannot be dismissed out of hand. So far, however, governments have confined themselves to trying to do just that. To the extent that they have paid any attention at all to the idea, they have denounced it as a radical departure, which it is.

Civilian-based defense is, in a phrase, nonviolent resistance. It can take many forms: symbolic protests, civil disobedience, social boycotts, strikes and economic boycotts, and other, more extreme methods of noncompliance, defiance, and disruption. The purpose is to deny any would-be attacker his objectives, ultimately by making a conquered country politically indigestible and its people ungovernable. The strategy may have the further effect of subverting the loyalty of the attacker's troops and functionaries, even inducing them to mutiny. In so doing, it is useful for deterring and defending not only against military invasion and occupation, but also against an internal seizure of power.

As a critical tool, civilian-based defense underscores the necessity of public acquiescence for the success of military conquest. In Sharp's words, "Civilian-based defense taps a crucial insight into the nature of power: all political power is rooted in and continually dependent upon the cooperation and obedience of the subjects and institutions of the society. That cooperation and obedience can be withdrawn." Talleyrand put it no less bluntly when he said it was possible to do everything with the point of a sword except sit on it.

Civilian-based defense also underscores the necessity of political support for military strategy. Without widespread public acceptance of their strategy, states may well lack the means to sustain it and the will to carry it out. That is especially so in the nuclear age when the sacrifices demanded by what passes for strategy are potentially enormous.

The relationship between political support and military strategy applies as much to alliances as it does to individual states. Nothing so threatens the unity of NATO as its doctrine of first use — that NATO is prepared to respond to conventional attack by initiating the use of nuclear weapons. Worse yet, nothing so undermines public support for NATO as a strategy that contemplates relying on those weapons for security. Attacking the Soviet Union itself would pose the dilemma of extended deterrence in its sharpest form for the United States because it risks Soviet retaliation, not against the site from which the attack was launched (Europe), but against the source of the attack, the United States or its military forces and installations. Attacking Warsaw Pact forces in Eastern

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Europe would pose the same dilemma, if not for the United States, then for its allies, because that attack invites retaliation in kind against NATO forces in Western Europe. Battlefield use of nuclear weapons would pose that dilemma most acutely for West Germany because the battlefield is likely to be the Federal Republic itself. Precisely at the point of utmost peril, therefore, the unity of NATO might be most threatened — and by a choice of its own devising.

As an alternative to current NATO strategy, civilian-based defense would eliminate the two most dangerous features of nuclear deterrence, the risk of pre-emptive war and the possibility of escalation. Yet, even though civilian-based defense may be useful as a critical tool, it is unlikely to muster support as an alternative strategy. Even Sharp, whose lifelong work on the strategy of nonviolence makes him ideally suited to make the case for civilian-based defense, wavers between calling for its adoption and calling for further study. This would appear to leave him in the tactically advantageous position of responding to criticism of civilian-based deterrence and defense by calling for further study, by governments as well as outsiders. Yet this stance is unlikely to move governments, who are inclined to respond to such proposals by simply ignoring them.

Further study, moreover, is not likely to prove conclusive enough to still the two critical doubts about civilian-based defense: whether or not Western polities can sustain it for long and whether or not it can sucessfully deter and defend against Soviet attack.

Nothing tests the morale of a nation as severely as prolonged occupation. Few peoples have been able to withstand the temptation to collaborate. Nonviolent resistance has obviously enjoyed some success in this century, but mostly in circumstances where the threat of violence was latent rather than entirely forsworn and where the oppressor regime — or its military and popular supporters — shared important norms with the oppressed. The overthrow of the Marcos regime in the Philippines is a recent example: it would not have succeeded without, in effect, a slow-moving military coup, in which the armed forces refused to turn their guns on the people and instead allied themselves with Aquino.

Sharp cites other, at least partial, successes of improvised civilian-based defense against invaders: German resistance to French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, Czechoslovak resistance to Russian control and ouster of the Dubcek government for eight months after the 1968 invasion, and the five years of Polish resistance to the imposition of martial law under Soviet pressure. With advance preparations, Sharp argues, civilian-based defense can do even better. Yet a state may be reluctant to empower its people in advance of an attack from within. That reluctance would be especially pronounced in divided societies, like Northern Ireland.

Sharp tries to make a case for the Soviet Union's special vulnerability to civilian-based defense. Yet even the most ardent anti-Communist might not want to put his or her belief in Soviet internal weakness to such a stern test. And lack of advanced preparation is not likely to explain away the limited and short-lived success that the strategy has had against the Soviet Union in the past. Even in Poland, where civilian-based defense did enjoy some temporary success, the key factor may have been the ambivalent role of the Polish Army, first threatening to resist a Soviet invasion and then carrying out internal repression. If civilian-based defense is to deter Soviet leaders, they must believe it is effective. They may, but Poland is not evidence in point, because Moscow had an alternative to invasion.

Some proponents of civilian-based defense see it as a supplement to military means, others as a total replacement for military means, still others as a partial substitute for those means in special circumstances when the country's military forces either have already suffered defeat or have themselves seized power in a coup d'état. Sharp seems to favor all three possibilities, depending on the extent of the society's advance preparations for waging such a defense. Yet under current circumstances civilian-based defense would make the most sense as partial supplement, an insurance policy against catastrophic failure of military means, not as a way-station to renunciation of military means altogether. Advance preparations for civilian-based defense could reinforce increased reliance on non-nuclear means for European defense. In so doing, it would bolster the political underpinning of NATO strategy, especially when an attack is imminent and alliance unity is most threatened. That is a point worth serious government study.

Speaking with tongues of memory

THE PAST

Galway Kinnell

Houghton Mifflin, $5.95, 57 pp.

David Lee Garrison

IN an earlier collection of his verse, *The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World: Poems 1946-64* (1974), Kinnell has a lovely poem for Robert Frost which contains certain lines that seem a fit epigraph for his own work in the mid-eighties:

> He turned. *Love,*
> *Love of things, duty,* he said
> And made his way back to the shelter
> No longer sheltering him, the house
> Where everything was turning to words. . . .

Everything, in a gentle, graceful, unassuming way, *is* turning into words: words about the days of a child, about the many relationships of love in our lives (or lives in our love), and about how time rewrites all relationships. We find in this latest volume a preoccupation with what Coleridge cared about in his finest "conversation" poems. We find a poet intent on making himself and children and nature whole, on making words that reveal that wholeness, and on using those words to burn some kind of purification into us all.

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This is a book that pleases, even surprises, by gathering weight in the reading, that seems to take on layers and layers of meaning gradually, almost without acknowledging that movement. The early poems are derived from what seem to be simple, even simplistic memories — chasing a piglet, rocking a child to sleep, rowing across a lake as a child to return home with milk for breakfast — while the poems that conclude the book bring us to less concrete, more evocative meditations on the relationship of those memories to the journey toward death. Kinnell never loses sight of just how closely we rely on memory to give value to life, nor of how important death is for helping us give value to the immediate, the daily, the passing.

As those familiar with Kinnell's work might expect, almost every poem places us in some relationship with land and water, or, almost as often, with air and fire. Consequently, even the simple poems are set in the context of a larger significance. But there is no overstatement in such poems; instead, the simple and the real are given fresh value by that wider context, somehow raised just slightly into prominence. A good example of the poet's desire for the presence of things, and for the gift of presenting things, appears in the brief poem, "Prayer," that opens the second of the book's three sections:

> Whatever happens. Whatever
> *what is* is is what
> I want. Only that. But that.

This is an especially American poetry. (There are echoes here, for example, of Whitman, Frost, Williams, Robert Penn Warren, and James Wright.) It is a poetry that combines the pragmatic with the visionary, that combines the solid object that we must first attend as image with the transcendent understanding the poet brings to our relationship with those defining objects. Kinnell provides us with long lines of catalogued memories, as well as sharply etched, pointed details. In "Cemetery Angels," for example, he gives us what to my ear is a lovely integration of Frost's lessons about the heat of death, of Williams's best eye for imagery, and of James Wright's revelation about the short moment between death and flight:

> On these cold days
> they stand over
> our dead, who will
> erupt into flower as soon
> as memory and human shape
> rot out of them, each bent
> forward and with wings
> partly opened as though
> warming itself at a fire.

But despite lessons of earlier poets (or perhaps partly because of them), this "American" sound is richly Kinnell's own. His ability to mitigate the impact of a direct image by raising the scene, through metaphor, into the realm of vision, as in "Cemetery Angel" is his own particular American poetic. We see this in isolated phrases that ring true: "We have to hold our children up to lean on them. / Everyone who could help goes or hasn't arrived." In the first poem of the volume, appropriately titled, "The Road Between Here and There," we find the poet listing significant memories attached to places along the "road," a road that begins in concrete, but ends solely in the mind. The break between the two sorts of description comes in this long, prose-like line:

> Here I sat on a boulder by the
> winter-steaming river and put
> my head in my hands and considered time — which is next to
> nothing, merely what vanishes,
> and yet can make one's elbows
> nearly pierce one's thighs.

The last three "lines" of the poem bring us to the beginning of the book and deliver us to our own considerations of that which is next to nothing:

> Here I arrive there.
> Here I must turn around and go
> back and on the way back look
> carefully to left and to right.
> For here, the moment all the spaces
> along the road between here and
> there — which the young know
> are infinite and all others know
> are not — get used up, that's it.

As we learned from his earlier *Mortal Acts, Mortal Words*, Galway Kinnell is a moral poet as well as one of pragmatism mixed with vision. There is a responsibility in his work enforced by our recognition of death and our unhesitating plunge toward it. I've tried to choose for one final quotation a passage that evokes not only that moral responsibility which Kinnell places in memory and language, but also the understanding of what Donald Hall has so gracefully referred to as "taking one's place in the story of leaves." A poem late in the volume, "First Day of the Future," ends this way:

> I don't know about this new life.
> Even though I burned the ashes of
> its flag again and again
> and set fire to the ticket that might
> have conscripted me into its
> ranks forever,
> even though I squandered all my
> talents composing my emigration papers,
> I think I want to go back now and
> live again in the present time,
> back there
> where someone milks a cow and
> jets of intensest nourishment go
> squawking into a pail,
> where someone is hammering, a
> bit of steel at the end of a stick
> hitting a bit of steel, in the archaic stillness of an afternoon,
> or somebody else saws a board,
> back and forth, like hard labor
> in the lungs of one who refuses to
> come to the very end.
> But I guess I'm here. So I must take
> care. For here
> one has to keep facing the right
> way, or one sees one dies, and
> one dies.
> I'm not sure I'm going to like it
> living here in the future.
> I don't think I can keep on doing it
> indefinitely.

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Out of place in the parish

NEW CATHOLIC WOMEN
A CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE TO TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY
Mary Jo Weaver
Harper & Row, $18.95, 213 pp.

Valerie Hendy

"ALAS," cried Arnolphe, at his young ward's defiant choice of a husband in Molière's *The School for Wives*, "This is what comes of teaching women to read."

New Catholic Women is a fine historical survey that charts the efforts of feminists who have, in a sense, been "taught to read" in the Roman Catholic church, and yet are still striving for equality there. One might imagine such a book would read like a latter-day martyrology, with feminists served up as the lions' lunch.

But the book is not only a chronicle of persecution. It is a scholarly look at Catholic women who are determined not to let patriarchy flow into the next century — impoverishing the church and imprisoning half its members in submembership. No new ground is broken here and readers of Catholic and secular newspapers are not in for any surprises. But for the uninitiated, this text offers a comprehensive look at the struggle women who identify themselves as Catholic and feminist are waging in a pathetically unyielding church.

Convinced that we live in a time of "increasing repression against women in the church," Dr. Weaver has no formulas for reconciling patriarchy and feminism. She admits Catholic women's indebtedness to the theology of Vatican II and the creative action of the secular women's movement. In re-imaging themselves, the Roman Catholic tradition, Dr. Weaver says, "is a gift as well as a burden."

Dr. Weaver, a professor of religious studies at Indiana University, acknowledges early in the book that a growing number of Catholic women are leaving the church because they can not endure the misogynistic atmosphere and see no reason to hope for improvement in the future. Most of these women are under the age of forty. I would have appreciated more information about where these women have gone. Have they joined other denominations? Have they lost faith? Or have they remained, simply, unchurched Catholics?

In spite of the marginal status of women in the church, Dr. Weaver finds some women have chosen to stay and claim the Roman tradition as their own. Creative, politically sophisticated, these women are fighting for their right to assume full membership in their own church. Dr. Weaver chronicles their attempts, particularly over the last twenty years, to work for change within the church and to formulate role models that sustain and inspire them.

Dr. Weaver only touches on the emergence of such important phenomena as Womanchurch — an example of women operating outside the patriarchy. She quotes Rosemary Radford Ruether on the significance of Womanchurch: "This means women engaged in liberation from patriarchy declare this community of women's liberation to be theologically church, that is to say, a community of redemption." Many Catholic women have joined together to worship in this way, beginning, perhaps, in the late 1960s.

What Dr. Weaver fails to do is explain how Womanchurch developed, describe its power structure, or talk about how worship in these groups is balanced with social action. Perhaps these are questions for a later study, but I was curious about what makes these groups work. For women like me, who feel utterly out of place in a parish, these new communities may provide an interim solution.

But interim is not good enough for many of us. Interim is commonly understood to mean "not in our lifetime." Dr. Weaver writes eloquently about the

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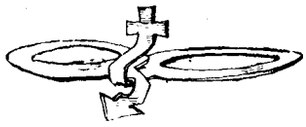
philosophers, theologians, nuns, sisters, and laywomen, feminists all, who are trying to make women more visible in an institution that finds them, essentially, invisible. However, this new breed of Catholic women, while angered by patriarchal exclusivity, has not been successful in breaking into the old boys' network which dictates the power structure of the Roman Catholic church.

In lieu of real power, Dr. Weaver explains, some feminists have chosen to enter Catholic academia as a way of es-



tablishing a place in the church. She allows that while feminist thinkers, women like Rosemary Ruether and Anne Carr, are hardly in the mainstream of the Catholic power structure, they are the leaders in a movement that is gathering momentum. Events like the Women's Ordination Conference meetings in Baltimore and Detroit have not escaped the notice of the church's hierarchy. Trivialized and humiliated by "investigations" spearheaded by the hierarchy, these feminists continue to hang on.

A recent article in *The New York Times* revealed to what lengths the patriarchal church will protect itself before it will consider women. A speaker at a church-sponsored conference on the growing incidence of child molestation by priests suggested that priests suffering from this problem never be allowed to work with children. In other words, male priests, who are sexually attracted to children, should be permitted to function as priests as long as they stay out of the catechism class and CYO gatherings. We are scraping the bottom of the clerical barrel here.

But these problems are nothing new. Dr. Weaver finds strains of backlash against feminism going back to immigrant days in the United States. She finds a link between the biblical and cultural roots of sexism and modern Catholicism in a nineteenth-century entry in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* about "Women" that says: ". . . The female sex, is in some respects inferior to the male sex, both as regards body and soul."

Of course some Catholic women have found fulfillment within narrow confines. The American church, particularly on the parish level, has always relied on female volunteers to keep everything from the school systems to the sacristy laundries in operation. But fewer and fewer women have found this fulfilling. "Whether the American Catholic church can continue to rely on us in this way is questionable, not because the church has changed, but because we are changing," Dr. Weaver writes.

Dr. Weaver documents cases of "official repression" like that against Agnes Mary Mansour, who was given an ultimatum by the pope to resign as social services director of Michigan or be severed from her thirty-three-year relationship with the Sisters of Mercy. The author also mentions Sister Clare Dunn. Minority leader in the Arizona state legislature when she died in an automobile accident in 1981, Dunn's fellow legislators eulogized her as "the conscience of the House and a champion of the poor."

Noting that renewal for many sisters has meant an assault on social sin, Dr. Weaver writes that, ". . . political ministry, especially, is a pertinent question as nuns understand religious life as living among the marginalized . . ." I would have been grateful for a more rigorous examination of the changes women have made in their lives as a result of having lived and worked with the poor. For a generation of Catholic women who came to maturity during the Vietnam War and civil rights struggles of the 1960s, these factors have shaped our consciousness of ourselves as women more powerfully than any ecclesiastical events.

For those unfamiliar with the players, Dr. Weaver introduces the women who are "re-imaging" a church that counts women among its full members. She offers commentary on the theological and philosophical works of (former Catholic) Mary Daly, Carr, Ruether, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. She also looks, too briefly, at evolving Catholic feminist spirituality, from Saints Teresa and Catherine of Siena to the God/ess movement. I wish she had broadened her survey to include Catholic women who are writing novels and essays, painting, dancing, and composing their vision of women. While the patriarchy remains dominant over the institution, there is nothing men can do to women who work at an easel or a typewriter.

Despite its focus on how women are making a difference, this book left me with a terrible sense of loss. As I read of the struggle against the patriarchy, I realized how little has been gained since the days when *The Catholic Encyclopedia* reaffirmed women's inferiority. I do not want to waste another instant of energy on anger, yet one can not read about the insults women continued to endure in the church and not be outraged. In her survey, Dr. Weaver leaves the impression that there is some cause for optimism for an integrated and equitable church. I wish I believed it.

REVIEWERS

LEON V. SIGAL, *the author of* Nuclear Forces in Europe *(Brookings), teaches government at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut.*

DAVID GARRISON *is writing a dissertation on the process of Keats and Coleridge.*

VALERIE HENDY *is a publicist in New York City.*

Correspondence

(Continued from page 418)

["Forgotten Partners," May 23]. It should serve to remind your readers that every time the United States sneezes, Canada catches a cold.

The protectionist sentiments in the United States conjure up memories of the Great Depression and the obstacles to worldwide recovery which barriers to international trade presented. Nonetheless, given the existing U.S. administration, free trade between Canada and the United States can only result in an attempt to extend the assault on the system of social security northward. Canadians have nothing to be proud of in this regard; the present Mulroney government is doing its best to achieve this end without having to integrate its efforts with those south of the border.

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Finally, it's no small commentary on the state of the economics profession that the economic insights expressed in the article come from someone outside of the profession.

HUGH GRANT

Noting a breakthrough

Southampton, N.Y.

To the Editors: The Himes brothers' essay ["Rights, Economics, & the Trinity," March 14], on the doctrine of the Trinity as the foundation of a political theology relevant to the economics pastoral, has all the marks of a breakthrough.

It is written with the unction found in the Fathers, the insight of the mystics, the clarity of a contemporary scholastic, and the urbanity of mature American scholars. . . .

For the gift of such faith-filled scholarship there is no equitable gratitude. It is the answer to Archbishop Weakland's comment to the priests of the diocese here on Long Island that the principal obstacle to overcome in ourselves and the faithful is the prevalent wrongheaded view of Christian faith being concerned with private and personal matters only, and not those structures of society that contradict the Gospel.

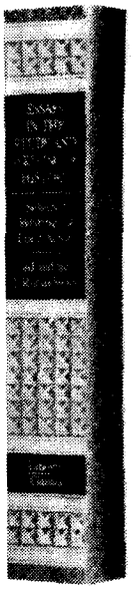
WILLIAM GORMLEY

A jump too quick

Lexington, Ky.

To the Editors: In re-reading "Rights, Economics, & The Trinity" [March 14], Himes and Himes suggest that rights be grounded in the self-giving relatedness of the Trinity, with each relationship bringing with it responsibilities and therefore rights.

However, in developing strategies to foster human community, the writers move too quickly to the *definition of rights* and concepts of justice, as a primary means. They also move far too quickly in assuming that the primary agent for satisfying claims delineated by rights must be the national government. They assume, without any rational support, the national government to be the agent best able to assume duties imposed by rights claims. I suggest that this is an



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unwarranted jump to an implicit unitarian "God on the throne" political theology and is not the thorough trinitarian undergirding the writers attempt.

A true trinitarian political theology would elucidate how "perichoresis," each loving person so self-giving as to be inside the other, is the model for all relationships, and how this activity must begin in smaller units first: the family, the neighborhood, the local community, the nearest and smallest level of government before the more remote and larger levels. . . .

I do not understand how a "trinitarian" political theology can be discussed without attention to the Catholic social principle of subsidiarity, since this affirms the urgent significance of relationships. This is an understanding both Democratic politicians and a still too autocratic church structure desperately need. As long as Catholics cannot have their human rights accepted and respected in their own church, the church itself is denying its own trinitarian theology, because fear, suspicion, power, and turf have excluded self-giving love, trust, and respect between persons.

Perhaps the full energy of the Spirit will be released only when the synergism of inter-independent small groups is fully affirmed. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst." PASCHAL BAUTE

Intimate burdens

Heidelberg

To the Editors: Joan C. Callahan ["The Fetus & Fundamental Rights," April 11] argued that "there are insurmountable difficulties in finding a compelling argument for the recognition of fetuses as persons that could justify imposing on a woman the particularly intimate burden of bearing an unwanted child." I cannot help nearly agreeing with Ms. Callahan. It seems to me that there is a general defect in our Catholic manner of arguing too statically where it is necessary to argue more dynamically and evolutionarily. (REV.) ALFONS BEIL

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

An all-male dozen

Covington, Ky.

To the Editors: It was a point of interest to me that the June 6 readers' discussion, "Abortion, Pluralism, Feminism," contained nine responses to the article, "The Fetus & Fundamental Rights," by Joan C. Callahan, and all were from men. Sidney Callahan's article, "Abortion & the Sexual Agenda," received three responses, and these were also from men.

NANCY MAXFIELD

Church/world watch

(Continued from page 425)

tary option will drive U.S. policy in Nicaragua. When it came to pursuing diplomatic openings, the rhetoric has always been stronger than the reality. But denying the administration a serious military option has at least given Congress grounds to press for diplomacy. Some members of Congress claim that the *contra* aid, now almost assured, will focus attention on the administration's diplomacy. To the contrary, it will put diplomacy on the back burner. The logic of policy will now be to give "the pressure" time to work. The consequences, short- and long-term, may be far more tragic than we currently imagine.

The direction of events in Central America cannot be ignored: it points to neither peace nor reconciliation. In view of that bleak truth, the temptation is strong to resign ourselves, to believe that events must simply run their course. Precisely the opposite attitude is needed. The *contra* vote is a serious mistake, but it is not the final word on U.S. policy. The effects of the vote can be restrained — and the logic of the policy it embodies should be reversed. Church-state relations in Nicaragua can also be rescued. The worst fate that can befall Central American policy would be a growing conviction that we have now passed beyond the point where policy-makers on all sides can reconsider and reverse the dangerous drift. J. BRYAN HEHIR

(J. Bryan Hehir is senior research scholar at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics and research professor of ethics and international politics at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown).

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